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S.P.C.K.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THREE LECTURES

ohn BY *883-*
J. K. MOZLEY, D.D.

WARDEN OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE, READING
LECTURER OF LEEDS PARISH CHURCH



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PREFACE

THE substance of these lectures, which were given at King's College, London, in 1925, remains unchanged. A few changes have been made, with the object of giving exacter expression to the thought or of making the meaning clearer.

Lack of attention to the New Testament is the source of much that is unsatisfactory and amiss in current discussions of matters religious and theological. That is certainly true of the doctrine of God. In consequence, it is not difficult to overlook both the strength of its foundations and the richness of its content. If these lectures, with their mainly expository character, help towards any better understanding of what the Christian doctrine of God involves, that will be a further ground of gratitude to the University of London for the invitation to deliver these lectures.

J. K. M.

Sept. 3, 1927.

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THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

I

THE HISTORICAL APPROACH THROUGH GREECE AND ISRAEL

THE key to the character and method of what I shall try to say will be found in the word "doctrine," which forms part of the title of the three lectures which I have been invited to give. Had the word been "idea," a metaphysical treatment of the subject would naturally have been suggested ; had the word been "experience," a primarily psychological investigation would have been almost inevitable. In neither case would it have been at all fitting for me to stand here. But "doctrine" is a word which belongs to theology, positive and historical, and seems to prescribe a corresponding mode of exposition. It will not mean that the lecturer can walk abroad in

a large but defined country where the metaphysicians cease to trouble and the psychologists are at rest ; but his concern with the problem which they raise will not be such as finds expression in Dr. Pringle-Pattison's *The Idea of God*, or in Professor Clement Webb's *God and Personality*, or in Professor J. B. Pratt's *The Religious Consciousness*. We may owe much to those who have made or followed up paths in which, nevertheless, we shall be wise not to tread unless we are confident that we can keep our footing.

There is a more positive point which I should like to emphasise at the beginning. A good deal of modern thinking about religion appears to me to be curiously aloof from the Bible. There may be real interest in religion with very little appreciation of the religious significance of what is, of its kind, the most remarkable literature in the world. This is the case not only with the Old Testament, but also with the New. And the result is that in the background of discussions and books, scientific as well as popular, which raise religious issues and the greatest of all such issues, the

being and nature of God, there is often an exceeding thinness of knowledge of the Bible or of understanding of its relevance. Now, if I may anticipate what I must try to expound more fully later on, I would say that as God is the centre of that immensely varied collection of writings which we call the Bible, so the meaning of God, and the relationships into which He enters with all that is not God, relationships so profound and extended that there is no point on any imaginable circumference which is not directly connected up with God as the centre, possess in those writings a richness of content well-calculated to produce on the mind the impression of a majestic wholeness and to engage the sympathies of the heart by the tenderness of its appeal. The God of whom it is said—

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit ?
 Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?
 If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there :
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.
 If I take the wings of the morning,
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;
 Even there shall Thy hand lead me,
 And Thy right hand shall hold me,¹

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.

is the God whose graciousness is equally without limits.

For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.
As far as the East is from the West,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.¹

I am not suggesting that everything about God in the Bible is on this level, nor that only in the Bible are such conceptions to be found ; but I have no doubt that the loss which follows from the neglect of the material available in the Bible is a very serious one. If religion and belief in God were mere phantasy, then the Bible's consistent witness to the reality and value of a species of illusion would be the measure of the necessity for its radical discrediting. But if there is, as the saying goes, " anything in religion " at all, it is unreasonable to leave the Bible out of all account as a source of possible knowledge.

People may have difficulties with the Biblical doctrine of God ; they may attribute to the Bible many doctrines, not one only ; but at

¹ Ps. ciii. 11-13.

least they should realise the significance of what they find there. My hope and attempt will be to make that significance plain, especially at certain points where in connection with a doctrine of God the roads divide.

A doctrine of God implies a claim to some degree of knowledge, capable of definitive formulation and expression, as distinct from a number of opinions. It implies also the existence of a community of some kind which believes that among the various relationships which constitute its life there is one in which it is necessary for it to take account of super-worldly power or powers to which there belongs an ultimacy beyond what is predicable of the world or of anything in it. Opinions about God may be most valuable contributions towards a doctrine of God, but they are not in themselves a doctrine. I would illustrate my meaning by a comparison between ancient Greece and ancient Israel, the two peoples of antiquity which have contributed most—so far the most that we need not, except in very rare connections, look beyond them—to that Christian doctrine of God which has been for fifteen

hundred years the ruling theological tradition of the West. The fact that this doctrine came to the West and did not proceed from it, and is, therefore, not stamped with the special characteristics of Western thinking, is of importance in view of the theological needs of Christian missionary enterprise.

Let us start with Greece. It would not be true to say that no doctrine of God was dominant among the Greek people, representing the outlook and controlling the practice of the city-states in relation to super-worldly powers. From the time of the Homeric poems there was such a doctrine, and it became something much more than a merely conventional orthodoxy. The great poets are a proof of that, so is the reverence in which the Delphic Oracle was held, so is the pride which, in its greatest era of political and artistic development, the city of Athens showed that it took in its patron-goddess.¹ But the religious and theological influence of Greece upon the thoughts of later

¹ The *Eumenides* of Æschylus may be referred to in this connection, and Pheidias' statues of the goddess Athene, which were among the greatest artistic glories of Athens.

ages has not been that of its communal beliefs, and of the doctrine which underlay the cultus and was the creed of the average citizen. The reason is not difficult to discover. Generalisations about a widespread phenomenon, capable of such varying and often conflicting manifestations, as is the case with religion, are dangerous ; yet a certain tension between this world and another or different world, within men as related to both worlds, and between men and the powers or power which from that other world exercise their authority over this, seems to be inherent in religious feeling and orientation. In Greek religion the assimilation of the gods to mortal men and women, which justifies Professor Gwatkin's comment upon the Olympians that "their one substantial difference from men is immortality,"¹ coupled with the strong tendency towards a deification of the forces and elements of the world of nature, if not destructive of, was at least inimical to, a realisation of that tension. Even a conservative like Aristophanes, who hated new

¹ *The Knowledge of God*, i. p. 289.

ideas in religion, made fun of the great gods.

We must look in other directions to discover the contribution of Greece. And first to the great poets who, without deliberately abandoning the Homeric mythology (even Euripides does not definitely commit himself), realised that a true theology must be an ethical theology, and were not far from realising that such a theology is possible only where the creed is practically monotheistic. That is, they begin to take seriously that predominance which in the Homeric poems belongs to Zeus.

Traces of this spirit are already to be found in Pindar. In the first Olympian Ode he plainly discredits the darker legends of the past, having as an illustration to hand the horrible story of Atreus and Thyestes. His comment is :

I cannot tax blest powers with greed so gross,—
I dare not !

While in the second Olympian the way in which he speaks of the discrimination between the evil and the righteous in the after-life,

which results from divine judgment, witnesses to a lofty sense of the need for the gods to be the vindicators of morality, and takes us far beyond the stage reached in the Homeric poems, especially in the *Iliad*.

With Æschylus we take a long step forward. He is one of the greatest religious poets of all time, one who is filled with reverence for the moral majesty of the gods. His plays have their real centre in heaven rather than on earth ; the tragedies of life, the slaying of a great and victorious king by his wife, the slaying of that wife by her son, the calamities which overwhelm a famous house, the disasters which shatter the forces of a great empire, are all for Æschylus revelationary of the divine will and the divine justice. We cannot say that he felt able to give a final theodicy, "to justify the ways of God to men," but that there was one he did not doubt. The noble lines in the first chorus of the *Agamemnon* are timeless in their truth :

"But whoso calls zealously in victorious tones upon Zeus will obtain perfect wisdom ; Zeus who guides mortals in the way of wisdom,

who has laid down as absolute law that wisdom comes by way of suffering.”¹

If Æschylus is, in his outlook on life, primarily a theologian, Sophocles is primarily a humanist. But for him too the final moral sanctions are divine, and in God's will is man's peace. The words with which the chorus encourage the almost despairing Electra are words of true faith in God :

“ Courage, my daughter, courage ; great still in heaven is Zeus, who sees and governs all ; leave thy bitter quarrel to him ; forget not thy foes, but refrain from excess of wrath against them.”²

And Antigone is the worthy precursor of apostles standing before a Jewish Council and saying, “ We ought to obey God rather than men,” in her reply to Creon's question and indictment that she had knowingly transgressed the law which forbade the burial of her brother :

“ Yes, for it was not Zeus that had published that edict ; not such are the laws set among men by the Justice who dwells with the gods below [that is a reference to the right which

¹ *Agamemnon*, 173-178.

² *Electra*, 174-178 (Jebb's tr.).

the gods of the Underworld have to the bodies of the dead] ; nor deemed I that thy decrees were of such force that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven. For their life is not of to-day or yesterday, but from all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth.”¹

With Euripides the case stands differently. He was sure that if the gods exist they must be good ; in the *Bellerophon* comes the line, “ If the gods do shame they are no gods ”² ; but as to the existence of the gods we cannot say that he was sure. The vehement denial of their existence in another passage of the *Bellerophon*³ may not be the poet’s own conclusion, but we should not find it standing unrefuted by either of his great predecessors.

But important as the great poets are in the movement towards a more unified and ethical theism which they represent, it is, to borrow the title of a famous work, to the “ evolution of theology in the Greek philosophers ” that we

¹ *Antigone*, 450-457.

² Fr. 20 in Bothe’s *Euripidis fabularum fragmenta*.

³ Fr. 6. The atheistic conclusion is drawn from the prosperity of the wicked.

must look if we are to appreciate the Hellenic contribution to the doctrine of God. Brief as the survey must needs be, we may learn enough from it to gain an impression of the characteristics of one of the most notable and sustained efforts after the highest knowledge to be found in the history of human thought.

The members of the earliest philosophical school were, on the whole, only casually interested in theology. Physics and cosmology took priority with them. They sought for the first principle of the world, but their tendency was to deify a physical element, water or air or fire, rather than to find the ground of all being in the will of the gods or of God. One of them, Anaximander, taught that the first principle was τὸ ἄπειρον, the boundless. He seems to be passing from physics to metaphysics, though the exact meaning of the phrase is doubtful, but hardly to what we should call theology, even if Aristotle, when he speaks of it in *The Physics*, does make "the boundless" identical with τὸ Θεῖον, the divine. Anaximander also held that "there were gods that came into existence, rising

and falling at long intervals, and that there were innumerable worlds.”¹ Such gods may have been morally more respectable than many of the Homeric divinities, but lack their immortality and are obviously products of a process and not in any way its explanation. Heraclitus brings physics and theology more closely together, and foreruns the Stoics. He chose an element, fire, as his first principle; but fire for him is one with Zeus or the law of the universe or, perhaps, even with the Logos, if a Logos doctrine is rightly ascribed to him. His system is pantheistic and its unity is not merely materialistic. But like other pantheistic thinkers he fails to interpret to us the meaning of good and evil *sub specie æternitatis*. “Good and evil are one”; “to God all things are fair and good and just, but men consider some things unjust, some just.” Such an obliteration of moral distinctions does not make either God or the world easier to understand.

There were three other pre-Socratic schools. Pythagoras, the founder of one, is a great name; unfortunately it is peculiarly difficult

¹ Ritter et Preller, *Historia Philosophiæ*,⁶ p. 11, from Cicero, *de Nat. Deor.* I. 10.

to know what his teaching was. He was a moral reformer, he paid considerable attention to the Orphic Mysteries, and he was attracted by the significance, as it seemed to him, of number, as a link between the mind and phenomena. So much is probable, but as to his theology we have no quite reliable tradition. According to sentences quoted from the Epitome of Pseudo-Plutarch's *De Placitis Philosophorum* in the *Placita of Ætius*,¹ Pythagoras and Plato agreed in teaching that the world was created by God, corruptible by nature and yet destined not to perish by grace of the divine providence, and that the soul is not God, but a work of the eternal God. Plutarch may be justified in attributing to Pythagoras a doctrine which suggests that Plato may have drawn upon Pythagorean material for the theology of the *Timæus*, but it is curious, if this is so, that Aristotle leaves it entirely on one side when he writes about Pythagoras in *The Metaphysics*. The Ionian philosophy was essentially monistic. The school which we know as that of the Atomists, since it explained

¹ In H. Diels' *Doxographi Græci*, pp. 392 f.

existence through movements of units of matter, infinite in number and called atoms first by Lucippus, was dualistic to this extent that it found a causal principle in necessity. There is nothing that we can call a doctrine of God, any more than there is with the early Ionians. But loosely associated with the Atomists proper stand two thinkers who turned in the direction of a really dualistic explanation of the world, distinguishing between constituent elements and moving forces in such a way as to suggest a contrast between the material and the spiritual, or, theologically, between creation and God. Empedocles can, like Anaximander, describe the gods as products, but, quite unlike him, he can speak of God as "holy and unutterable mind flashing through the whole world with rapid thoughts." His contemporary Anaxagoras, with his doctrine of mind, *νοῦς*, as the disposer and causer of all things, raised, if we can trust Plato, the highest hopes in Socrates.¹ If *νοῦς* was in control everything would be for the best. But Anaxagoras did not realise the greatness of his own discovery. Socrates'

¹ *Phædo*, 97, 98.

expectations vanished as he read on, and Aristotle dryly remarks in *The Metaphysics* that Anaxagoras used mind as a *deus ex machina*; he brought it in when he could not get on without it; not otherwise.¹ We certainly cannot believe in a mind or a God *ex machina*. Yet Anaxagoras stands on the brink of pure theism. The third great pre-Socratic school is the Eleatic. In metaphysics its emphasis is laid on being, not on becoming. To theology only Xenophanes, the first of the Eleatic philosophers, made any considerable contribution. Not only did he attack in the most outspoken way, and in the interests of moral decency, the accounts of the gods given by Homer and Hesiod, but he positively taught the doctrine of one supreme God, "all eye, all mind, all ear, governing all things by the thought of his mind." This might well be the language of pure theism, but the consensus of opinion is that Xenophanes was pantheist rather than theist. Certainly Aristotle's comment upon him, "He concentrated his thought upon the world and said

¹ *Metaph.* i. 4

that God is the one," points that way.¹ His successor, Parmenides, achieved great eminence as a philosopher, but with him theology seems to have been entirely lost in metaphysics. If we were to express in two words the object of the pre-Socratic philosophy, taken as a whole, those two words would undoubtedly be *περὶ φύσεως*, concerning nature. Neither "concerning God" nor "concerning man" would be a true description. A strong reaction comes with the Sophists. They were the critics of their day, especially in regard to the theory of knowledge, and the only issue of their method, if itself uncriticised, was a universal scepticism in ethics, metaphysics, and theology. As to the latter, a dictum of Protagoras, perhaps the most eminent Sophist, lacks neither decisiveness nor, as it seems to me, a touch of humour: "Of the gods I can know neither that they exist nor that they do not exist; for many are the hindrances to such knowledge, the obscurity of the matter and the brevity of human life."² If only we lived longer! It is Bernard Shaw

¹ *Metaph.* i. 5.

² *Diogenes Laërtius*, ix. 51, quoted in Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*, i. p. 76.

speaking Greek. The real good the Sophists did was in turning men's minds inwards, and, therefore, inevitably to moral questions, whatever might happen to the answers. And so they prepared the way for that greatest critic who used criticism, as it always should be used, for further constructive purposes. A new era starts with Socrates.

We have two first-hand accounts of the teaching of Socrates given us by Xenophon and Plato respectively, and, as is well known, there are important differences. If Xenophon gives us the whole truth, Socrates, though a profoundly religious man and one who was continually investigating the meaning of ethical terms, did not concern himself with speculation concerning the problems of philosophy or theology. When he defends the belief in divine providence against the practical atheism of Aristodemus he uses the teleological argument of the plain man in the plain man's way.¹ I do not know if Paley was acquainted with Socrates' remarks on the mechanism of sight, but if so, he must have been pleased.

¹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, i. 4.

The Apology of Socrates, as given by Plato, is at least not inconsistent with this view, and Aristotle supports it when he says that Socrates concerned himself with ethics, not with the totality of nature.¹ On the other hand, some of the greatest of the Platonic Dialogues, such as *The Republic*, the *Phædo*, and the *Parmenides*, represent Socrates as formulating opinions which take us far beyond the region of practical conduct or religious piety. It is difficult to suppose that there is nothing of the real Socrates in all this. What does seem probable is that what we should call natural science, especially in relation to cosmology, ceased to attract Socrates. But that would not involve the conclusion that there is nothing of the real Socrates in Plato's conception of the transcendental world and in the theory of ideas, those real existences which in some way communicate themselves to the lower world and give to phenomena a measure of reality. After all, the final idea is the idea of the good, and such a metaphysic of morals is not un-Socratic.

That Socrates conceived of *Tὸ Θεῖον*, the

¹ *Metaph.* i. 6.

Godhead, the divine thing, as in effect a unity seems highly probable. A passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* points in that direction, where Socrates argues that it cannot be a true supposition that whereas the human mind can think of widely separated matters, "the wisdom of God is not capable of taking care of all things at once."¹ The fact is that it is difficult to form a notion of divine providential activity towards the world and men, without, in effect, postulating the divine unity. We should be surprised to learn that Socrates associated his divine sign with one rather than another of the Olympic deities. This religious experience was for him an experience of God. What shocked some of the Christian Fathers,² for whom a Daimon was too nearly a devil, is to us a sign of deep personal religion.

All sorts of questions arise with regard to Plato's own philosophy. But if we compare him for a moment with the great Eleatic thinker Parmenides, his special significance is clearly visible. Parmenides went deeply into

¹ i. 4.

² E.g. Tertullian, *Apol.* 22; Augustine, *De Civ. Dei.* viii. 14.

the problem of reality, and reality he identified with being, static and allowing of no element of change or becoming. This metaphysic was never, as far as we know, expressed by him in theological terms. With Plato it is wholly different. He is equally concerned with the question, "What is real?" In his answer he is much nearer to Parmenides than to Heraclitus and to the doctrine expressed in the gnomic saying, πάντα ῥεῖ, "everything is in a state of flux." But the Platonic metaphysic both culminates in a theology and can be expounded as a theology. The doctrine of a universe is grounded in a doctrine of God. The highest element in man, "the soul," is inexplicable unless there is a soul of the universe. "Would you not say," asks Socrates in the *Philebus*, "that in the divine nature of Zeus there is the soul and mind of a king, because there is in him the power of the cause?"¹ In *The Sophist* the idealistic argument is pressed to the same conclusion. Only one rational answer is possible to the stranger's question, "Can we ever be made to believe that motion

and life and soul and mind are not present with the perfect being? Can we imagine that being is devoid of life and mind, and exists in awful unmeaningness, an everlasting fixture?"¹ The creation of the world is in the dialogue referred with confidence to God, though it is not till the *Timæus* that we arrive at the detailed exposition of Plato's theological cosmology.

What Plato did, and what, I think, we may believe that Socrates in some measure did, was to overcome by their serious attention to mind as the essentially causal and creative principle the disappointment which they felt at Anaxagoras' half-hearted and vacillating use of a great discovery. And there, with Socrates and Plato, ethics comes to the front, not as a departmental study, but as determining the character of metaphysical and theological belief; the problem of being is considered along with the problem of goodness, because in the final issue they are one problem, not two. In Plato the ethical emphasis appears in connection both with the theory of ideas and with the doctrine of God's creative action.

In the dialectic of *The Republic*, the conclusion is reached that the highest knowledge is the knowledge of the good, and the highest being, even transcending being, is the Idea of the good, the cause of being and essence in those things which are the objects of knowledge, and as such real.¹ Of the belief in God as the good Creator, the most striking expression is found in the *Timæus*, where Timæus, the spokesman of the dialogue, says to Socrates, "Let me tell you why the Creator made this world of generation. He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is, in the truest sense, the origin of Creation and of the World, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men : God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable."² The moral result of this for human conduct appears in the Passage of the Laws, where the Athenian Stranger sharply differs from the well-known principle of

¹ vi. 509.

² 29, 30.

Protagoras that man is the measure of all things. On the contrary, "God ought to be to us the measure of all things, and not man, as men commonly say : the words are far more true of him. And he who would be dear to God must, as far as possible, be like him and such as he is." ¹ Not everything is clear in Plato ; for instance, whether he precisely identified the idea of the good with God, and how far he has a solution of the problem of evil. There is a great passage in *The Statesman* of special value because it presents to us God not only as the Creator, but as the Saviour. When the world was in danger of universal ruin because of the power of evil in it, "God, the orderer of all, in his tender care, again seated himself at the helm." He restored the disordered elements "and made the world imperishable and immortal." ² The evil is referred for its source to a previous state, out of which "came elements of evil and unrighteousness which first of all passed into the world, and were then transmitted to the animals." This is not an adequate explanation. But particular difficulties should

¹ iv. 716.

² 273.

not obscure for us the fact that Plato's doctrine of God includes all those elements on which theistic philosophers have laid stress. God is one and eternal, as the contrast in the *Timæus* between Him, the Father and Creator, and the created divinities makes plain.¹ He is self-conscious mind, purposeful, wholly good. In Him is no variableness and no deceit. He is the transcendent God, but His relation to the universe is not conceived of in any remote, deistic manner. The universe is the visible God, the image of the intellectual God, the only-begotten,² owing directly to the supreme God its divinest part or element, its soul.

To such a height did philosophical theology rise with Plato. But on those heights it did not stay. The glory of the Academy faded, and the Platonic school ceased to be a school of theology. Aristotle has a doctrine of God, indeed a majestic one. God is eternal, immovable substance, pure actuality. His life is the perfection of thought or contemplation, a *νοήσις νοήσεως*, a thinking of thought. He moves the world as the object towards

¹ 40, 41.

² *Ib.* 92.

which creation is drawn. In a phrase of great religious possibilities Aristotle says of God in relation to the world, *κινεῖ ὡς ἐρώμενον*, "He moves it as loving Him."¹ Unfortunately, exactly where such an utterance suggests that Aristotle would advance even beyond Plato by developing the notion of a reciprocity of feeling between God and the world he comes to an absolute halt. The God of *The Metaphysics* is transcendent and self-centred, though the state of blessed contemplation in which he lives is not wholly beyond man's reach, since man can sometimes attain to a similar contemplation. But Aristotle has no conception of divine providence, nor does he think of God as entering into any relations with the world. The world owes neither its matter nor its form to Him as to an actively operative Creator. We may allow for the appearance of some idea of divine immanence in Aristotle's philosophy in the notion of the active intellect in the human soul, the one element therein which survives death,² but this does not amount

¹ *Metaph.* xii. 7, 1072 b.

² *De Anima*, ii. 9 ; *De Gen. et Corrupt. Animal.* ii. 3.

to any real linking up of the individual with God.

Of the Stoic theology, the only other theology arising within a Greek pre-Christian philosophical school to which reference need be made, very different impressions will be gained according as we attend chiefly to the cosmology or chiefly to the ethic associated with it. There is a grandeur about its religious ethic which the essential determinism of the whole system cannot efface. The moral ideal is one to which men can attain ; the virtue of the wise man is as the virtue of Zeus. Its cosmology does not lack attractiveness in so far as it shows a sense of the significance of the world's order and internal harmony. But the weakness of a pantheism which has no room for a distinction between spirit and matter or between God and the world is apparent in the fact that this Stoic philosophy is one of simple recurrence and in no way of progress towards a final outcome or destiny. In Stoicism, at any rate, the immanental law is no true teleological principle. And this reacts upon the ethics. They lack buoyancy and hope.

Instead there is the acceptance, as Dr. Strong expressed it in his Bampton Lectures on Christian ethics, "with a dull passion of endurance whatever came."¹ If God is only another name for the natural order, He cannot remedy what defects appear in that order.

I do not think that we are guilty of disparaging the work of the Greek thinkers in the province of theology if we regard the net result as disappointing, and conclude that the Greek method by itself was incapable of reaching stable positions. And I believe that the root defect is that the doctrine of God, however stated, was predominantly a doctrine of the schools, out of touch with history and experience. The fluctuations of speculation were uncorrected by the apprehension of God resting on different grounds. The philosophers did not establish a monotheistic creed. The long and repeated attacks which Christian apologists for some three hundred years made on the absurdities and immoralities of polytheism may appear to us as out of all proportion to the need. Was it not the flogging of a horse

¹ *Christian Ethics*, p. 9.

long moribund? Yet the attacks suggest deeper reflections. The philosophers had been neither radical enough nor constructive enough. And their appeal had been to their own findings. It is not the only method for reaching a doctrine of God. Men who believe that they know God because they have first been known by Him start from a different basis and follow a different road.

It is because of this different basis that the road taken in Israel is so strikingly unlike the road taken in Greece. Amid whatever is doubtful as to the development of Israel's religion and as to the process whereby the nation's creed became purely monotheistic, one fact is certain at every stage and level of the movement—God was the God of Israel's history who had made Himself known as the one God whom Israel had to worship and obey. In the Old Testament the stress is continually laid on the action and reaction between God and Israel. Israel is God's people, knit to God by a covenant which assures the people of God's guidance and protection, providing that there is an answering loyalty, to be specially

manifested in not going after other gods to serve them.

It is against this background that the early historical and prophetic writings are to be understood, and the progressive enrichment of the doctrine of God to be appreciated. Here again we may contrast Israel with Greece. In Greece there are great personal influences and philosophical schools in which theological conclusions emerge. But there was no consistent background when once the Homeric account of the gods had been reduced to mythology or regarded as irrelevant to questions of ultimate reality. How different is it with Israel ! There are great personalities—a Moses, an Elijah, an Isaiah. There are schools of the Prophets. But all the time there is the background of Israel's God, Jahveh. Exactly the reverse of the Greek development takes place. In Greece the Olympian deities as such more and more cease to count with those who aspire to be the philosophical and religious teachers of the Greek mind. But in Israel the great teachers never for a moment look away from Jahveh. It may be proper to discriminate care-

fully between mono-Jahvism, the faith which cleaves to Jahveh but admits the existence of other gods who have their own territorial rights, and monotheism, the faith in one only God, the God of the whole earth. Jephthah certainly believed that Chemosh was a real God who looked after the interests of Moab,¹ and David's complaint to Saul that he was being driven out of his own country to serve other gods also implies that there are limits to Jahveh's dominion.² But we shall make too much of this distinction unless we recognise that from the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, Jahveh was to be for the nation the one only God. If the many questions which arise in connection with the early history of Israel and its religion, with the Exodus, and Sinai, and the character of the cultus in the early days of the occupation of Canaan, lead us to overlook that salient fact, then we do not see the wood for the trees. Jahveh always remains Jahveh. He becomes explicitly in Deutero-Isaiah the only God. The ironical descriptions of idols and idol-worshippers are intended to drive

¹ Judges xi. 24.

² Sam. xxvi. 19.

home the conviction of His solitary majesty, of His creative work, of His providence. But He never ceases to be the God of the nation's history, and yet more remotely of the Patriarchs, the nation's fathers. All those intimate relations which may be thought of as summed up in the frequent Old Testament conception of God as having known Israel by name are never lost in the universal aspects of deity. And so once more a contrast with Greece of the first importance comes to light. As the Greek creed is purified, the notion of personal relationships between God and man becomes thinner ; there is no rich flow of feeling and desire and purpose backwards and forwards between God and man. But it is just here that the stream of Israel's religion flows fullest and deepest. In the Psalms it is expressed in the language of individual piety not for an age but for all time. It may be said that the uncertainty about the date of the Psalms, or, more positively, the ascription of a number of them to the Maccabæan period, must make us wary in using the Psalter as evidence for the character of the Hebrew religion, anyhow until the time of

the second temple. Certainly the individualism of the Psalms is an advance in the religion ; but the variety of ways in which the personal relationships between God and men are expressed is a natural development from the idea of the nation as the personal *vis-à-vis* to God. Early Greek philosophy was, as we saw, taken up with the problem "concerning nature," and to that problem there was a return with the Stoics. Of that problem there is, I think it is not too strong to say, no trace in the Old Testament. Instead we have, not a problem, but a presentation of God and man and of the relations between God and man always on the level of personal life, though on the human side the life of the nation overshadows, at least at first, the life of the individual. Accordingly, the uncertainty which attaches to the conception of what we should call personality in God, if we regard Greek philosophy as a whole, is entirely absent in the Old Testament. The metaphysical question is never above the horizon. Whatever perplexities at times beset the Hebrew as he thought about the ways of God with man,

perplexities which come to different but direct expression in Ecclesiastes and Job, and are not absent from some of the Psalms, they do not raise the question, "How is the true life of God to be conceived?" When the tendency increased to exalt all that expressed the transcendent aspects of God's being, which, in late Judaism, led to a weakening of the thought of God's direct contact with the world in creation and providence, that was not due to any difficulty as to the divine personality, but had its roots in the sense of the moral majesty of God.

There, too, the Hebrew trod more firmly than the Greek. One of the extraordinary facts from time to time revealed in the attitude taken up towards the Old Testament by some writers on religious subjects is the failure to distinguish in respect of the Hebraic conception of God between form and substance. The criticism of the despotic or sultanic idea of God supposed to inhere in the Old Testament is completely at fault owing to this failure. It is not merely that throughout the literature in question the characteristic emphasis falls upon

exactly those attributes of personality which we do not ascribe to a despot, so that the writers are continually returning to the assurance that God is pitiful, merciful, long-suffering, in a word, gracious, but it is almost always possible to discern in narratives which seem to present God as the great and terrible potentate a moral interest and moral understanding of the action. The moralising is imperfect. The writers interpret from a level or series of levels on which there could be no clear moral vision. But the narratives of Jahveh's dealings with the people during the Exodus wanderings, of the destruction of the Amalekites by Saul, and of the numbering of the nation by David, all of which bring into great prominence the divine vengeance and the destructive activity of Jahveh against those who are the objects of His wrath, do not reveal action taken in disregard of moral sanctions. The instinct of the Hebrews was to connect whatever appeared to manifest God's destructive activity with previous evil on which there must fall punitive judgment. So they read history, both their own and that of other nations. It was not a profound way, and on

any showing it was, and could not but be, one-sided, like the arguments of Job's friends. But it was not unethical. Doubtless there was a strong tendency to look no further than the will of Jahveh as that was held to have revealed itself, but implicit in every conviction as to the manifestation of His will is the immediate next affirmation, "and the will of Jahveh is righteous." I think that we have to some extent lost the weighty note of insistence on God's righteousness which the Old Testament as a whole shows to us as characteristic of the Hebrew; the emphasis falls elsewhere—I do not say wrongly. But we are consequently less capable of appreciating one great side of the Old Testament doctrine of God. That doctrine forms itself in the Old Testament books round three primary certainties, Jahveh is Israel's God, Jahveh is personal, Jahveh is righteous. Of these the second was as sure as the other two, though incapable, in view of the unmetaphysical character of the Hebrew mind, of the same direct expression. It is through the conviction of God's self-revelation as the God of Israel, the righteous God, that the Old Testament

writers approached the conception of God's immanence in the world. And it is a striking fact that to this doctrine of immanence, so familiar if not always profound in modern religious thinking, unphilosophical Israel contributes far more than philosophical Greece. It is true that in our knowledge of it Greek philosophy has as one of its earliest sayings a half verse of its father Thales—*πάντα θεῶν πλήρη*, "all things are full of gods." But this was not symbolic of the future. No great tradition of immanence arises. Heraclitus and the Stoics cannot rightly be quoted on the other side, for in their pantheistic systems the note of difference and distinction, which the idea of divine immanence properly involves, disappears. The Stoic cosmos is a two-faced Janus; its one aspect suggests a materialistic basis, its other a spiritual:—in point of fact each aspect is the other differently delineated. But the Hebrew, assured of the manifestation of God's activity in the history of the nation, found no difficulty in the further thought of God's energy in the world of nature. Here we see the suggestiveness of the Old Testament references,

in many different contexts, to the Spirit of Jahveh. Dr. Nairne has said that "the immanence of God is one form of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."¹ I should turn the sentence round in order to apply it to the Old Testament, and speak of the notion of the Spirit as the characteristic Old Testament way of expressing the divine immanence. It is a curious and interesting fact that while in respect of the fine arts no one would think of comparing Israel with Greece, skill in embroidery and artistic designs and in execution of more than one kind is definitely referred in the last chapters of Exodus to the presence of the Spirit of Jahveh with or upon the workmen. It is obvious that the kind of problem which the word "Immanence," just as the kind of problem which the word "Transcendence" suggests to us, did not concern the Hebrew, anyhow until he came in touch with the Greek philosophical world, and even then one must not exaggerate the extent of the Greek influence. God's immanence, like His transcendence, was for the Hebrew the result of the truth of His moral nature. God

¹ *The Faith of the Old Testament*, p. 76.

was the transcendent God inasmuch as He was the holy God ; He was immanent by His spirit inasmuch as He was the God who had purposes for the people He had chosen, and was ready to give active help towards the achievement of those purposes. At the same time, the life of God never begins to be identified with the cosmic order as is the case in pantheistic systems. In Hebraic, as distinct from Hellenic thought, the life of God is conceived of as consistently in touch with the world, while consistently distinct from it.

The atmosphere of the Old Testament is totally different from that of a theological textbook. Nevertheless, a doctrine of God in the old-fashioned sense, a theology of His being and attributes, is inherent in it. To some points of importance in that doctrine I have drawn attention, and all that has had to be left unexplored seems to derive in large measure from a few fundamentals, with a progressively richer content. Doubtless Xenophanes, with his general presumption that man tends to make God in his own image, would have been as severe on certain of the early Old Testament

passages, because of their anthropomorphisms, as he was on the description of the gods given in the early Greek poets.¹ But to the immoralities of Greek mythology he would have found no parallel.

Where a very vivid impression of the reality of the life of God, especially in the blending of will and feeling, prevails, the danger of construing the meaning of that divine life all too humanly is not negligible. God may appear to transcend the world simply as a greater individual, whose power and emotions are indeed on a scale to which the world offers at no point any comparison, but do not suggest any essential unlikeness of divine to human nature. This danger is most present in the earliest narratives which have found a place in the Old Testament, and steadily recedes. Yet it is true, even when the fullest account is taken of the deepening and enlargening of the thought of God in the later prophetic literature and in the Psalms, that in any doctrine of God which aspires to completeness questions must be faced which do not concern the Old Testament writers. And

¹ Cf. H. Diels, *Die Fragmente des Vorsokratiker*, pp. 59 f.

that lack of concern is not disconnected with the very clear realisation of what we should call the divine personality. In Greek philosophy, on the other hand, we note the reverse danger of the depersonalising of the notion of God by the failure to see the life of God manifesting itself in a stream of personal relations with man.

With the New Testament we shall be occupied in various ways in the following lectures. Here I will only say that there is a place within it both for the best convictions of Israel's faith and also for the attempts to construct a rational theology which make their appearance in Greek philosophy. The New Testament is not simply the climax of the old. It is, indeed, that in a way which does not apply to the relationship of the New Testament to Socrates and Plato. The connection in the one case, not in the other, is of immediate and direct prolongation. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the names of Plato, St. John, and Origen, the Christian philosophical theologian who owed so much to both, form a threefold cord. Bishop Westcott owned his religious debt to St. John, Origen, and Browning ; the

present Bishop of Manchester substitutes the name of Plato for that of Origen.¹ I hope it is not too presumptuous to suggest that the ideal triad is that which I have mentioned. Platonism, the most profoundly religious of all the great metaphysical systems of the Greeks, St. John's Gospel, the Spiritual Gospel, and the theology of Alexandria have kinship one with another. It is possible to believe that the dependence of Christian doctrine, in the process of its formulation, and in its conclusions, upon Greek philosophy has been greatly over-emphasised and yet to allow that already within the New Testament the Christian conception of God is presented in a way that would attract philosophically-minded Greeks, and enable them to find there what they wanted and what the philosophy of Greece had in some measure foreshadowed. The ethical monotheism of Christianity, never more significant than to-day amid so many cross-currents of modern thought, confirms not only the highest level of Old Testament religion, but what the best of the Greeks were trying to say.

¹ *Mens Creatrix*, pp. vii. f.

II

GOD IN RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE AND TO MAN

IT is familiar knowledge to all who are, if only in a general way, in touch with the currents of modern philosophical thought as they affect theology, that from the time of Kant the theistic or Christian apologist who wished to be up to date had to go, let us say cannily and circumspectly, when he adduced the well-known arguments from causation and from design, described by Kant as the cosmological and the physico-theological, in proof of the existence of God. Nor is the intellectual climate of the present day favourable to any emphasis upon such arguments. We live in an age when there is certainly a much bigger public for psychological than for metaphysical disputation, and the kind of philosophy of religion which really interests people is, if such a thing yet exists, a point which I leave to the

professionals, the philosophy of religious experience. Nevertheless the old arguments are not dead in substance, whatever be true of their form. It is, I take it, largely a matter of putting the questions in the right way, so that the answers may not be criticisable on the score that they never enable us to pass beyond the world to God. Such a question as that on which Dr. Matthews lays stress in his *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, "Why does the world as we experience it exist, and what is its significance and the meaning of life?" gives the defender of theism a wider field within which to operate than was the case when God was regarded as the one logical solution of puzzles connected with the backward extension through time of effects and causes, and with appearances of purpose in the universe which, but for the postulating of His existence, would possess no key to their presence. But we are not now concerned with apologetics. What I want to suggest is that if ethical monotheism represents an abiding stage in the doctrine of God, then some such relation to the world as the cosmological and teleological arguments indicate

must exist. Problems of which we are conscious raise no fatal objection. Pantheistic identification of God with the world and the aloof transcendence of the God of Aristotle's metaphysics will alike be rejected as involving different systems, not without certain points of contact, but still, as a whole, definitely alternative. And that is demonstrable from this one fact that in the ethical monotheism of the prophets of Israel—that is, in the world-view that underlies their outlook—even if in the pre-exilic writers the possibility of the existence of other gods is not formally repudiated, the dominating thought is of God's relationship with man. Apart from that, one can hardly say that the prophets show any interest in a theory of the universe. On the other hand, for Aristotle and for the pantheists man's relation to God is of no such importance. It may be said that in Stoicism the wise man is as Zeus. It is true that when the Stoic came to speak of man he expressed his physical system ethically, but apart from the question whether he was in all respects consistent in the ethical structure which he built upon a foundation of physics, the wise

man of the Stoic philosophy is only the highest point in the working-out of a determined scheme which admits of no variations, only of endless repetitions. A special importance of man, at once in relation to God and in contrast with the rest of the phenomena of the world, is not inherent in Stoicism.

Now in the Hebrew-Christian doctrine of God there is given the thought that God is the Creator of the world and that in the world there are the signs of a designing mind and will. But the emphasis lies on what that mind and will mean for man. There is an anthropocentrism discernible in this connection which is not naturally congenial to an age habituated to think of the universe in terms of its physical immensity. Yet this anthropocentrism derives from a fundamental theocentrism which finds the values of existence to be at their highest when they involve conscious ethical correspondences with the will of God. Such a world-view, with the distinctive position of man safeguarded by a realisation of his moral significance, is not given by the old arguments from causation and design in their old form.

These were intended to show that, whether we consider the world as a whole or the orderly interconnections of its parts, we can find a rational explanation only in something which transcends the world. But the Biblical presentation of God as the Creator of the world, who reveals Himself within the world, does not lay the stress on the same points. According to it, the importance of the world is that it is the field of moral history, wherein man achieves moral ends through fellowship with God. The Bible is orientated towards the future, and is concerned, not with origins, but with ends. The doctrine of creation is enclosed within a single verse, and that the first verse of the Bible : " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The enlargements of this verse in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and in the opening verses of St. John's Gospel, where an echo of Genesis may be heard, are enrichments of the doctrine of God, not of the doctrine of creation. It is truly ironical that the theological issue, with direct reference to the Bible, that was supposed to be raised by the theory of evolution, was as to the possibility

of believing in God as the Creator. This was mixed up with the question of verbal inerrancy and, therefore, of the detailed scientific accuracy of the Genesis narrative. But behind that there appeared to form itself the antithesis—either God creates or the universe evolves. But the truth of such an antithesis obviously depends on what is supposed to be involved in, or is read into, the belief that God is the Creator. Such corollaries seem to have been largely accepted on both sides of the controversy. But the controversy itself would have lost much of its bitterness if it had been realised that a Biblical doctrine only exists in this sense, that in distinction from many mythologies and speculations the Bible affirms and implies that the one sufficient cause for the existence of the world is the will of God in active self-expression.

When we think, not of causation, but of design, a great difference is to be noted. Design implies purpose of some kind, and in connection with the idea of purpose the richness of the Biblical outlook is unmistakable. In one of his earlier works, *The Problem of Faith and Freedom in the Last Two Centuries*, Dr. Oman

pointed out that it is through the idea of purpose that the religious interpretation of history operates.¹ This is everywhere the case in the Bible, which finds the key to history in moral values and sees the actualising of moral values in man's response to God's purposes and co-operation with them. This is the inner side both of the forward-looking strain in the Old Testament, which gains increasing definiteness in the hope of the Messianic age, and of the profounder and more universal New Testament Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Now it is quite clear that what we usually mean by the Argument from Design does not carry us as far as these, or similar, interpretations of the divine purpose. That argument deduces from the observable adjustment of means to ends the operation of purposive intelligence, but it cannot, of itself, demonstrate the moral character and meaning of the world-process. The Biblical

¹ Pp. 408-412. Dr. Oman is arguing that, apart from freedom, human history has no real significance amid the vastness of the universe; but, "if . . . freedom is a genuine act of choice, and if the sense of right is a guide to the eternal and the ultimate meaning of things, history becomes the record of man's advance towards God's purpose, and has a significance not measured by space and time."

teleology, on the other hand, is through and through moral. Here and there, as in the nineteenth psalm, or in the overpowering appeal to the wonders of nature in the closing chapters of Job, we catch the spirit of confidence in the testimony of nature to God ; but it is with God's purposes for man that the Biblical writers are primarily concerned, and the only cosmic movement which falls within the focus of their attention is that of human wills towards or away from God. So, of the four formal principles recognised by Aristotle, essence, matter, moving cause, and final cause or end, the Biblical stress is upon the fourth, and in a Christian philosophy of religion which remains true to its data that must always be the case. It is noteworthy that it is in connection with his fourth principle alone that Aristotle introduces an ethical valuation. The fourth principle is, he says, " that for which, and the good, for this is the end of all generation and movement." ¹ " Unto Him are all things," says St. Paul,² after he has expounded his conception of the goodness of God as revealed in the historical move-

¹ *Met.* i. 3.

² *Rom.* xi. 36.

ment in which the divine purpose of salvation is to be recognised. The apostle and the philosopher speak in different ways, but the meaning which underlies their expressions is the same.

What term or title best describes God's relationship to the world? The choice lies between two sets of expressions, those which are of an abstract and impersonal nature, such as law, substance, idea, and even spirit, and those which are taken from some phase of personal life. God may be spoken of as King or Moral Governor or Judge, any of these titles being employed, not exclusively, but as calling attention to a fact which is regarded as of special relevance. Nevertheless there is a danger in such personal descriptions lest they should colour unduly the whole character of religious thought and experience. Either choice has its particular perils; the graver is that of the impoverishment of the moral values of religion and of the reduction of the ideal of communion with God to that of conformity with the plan or nature of the universe. Such a conception is an inferior substitute for the inspiration which is born of the belief that man is called to

loyal fellowship with God and is blessed in the obedience which he gives ; moreover, it fails to convey any clear sense of reciprocity between man and God.

The second danger is wholly avoided and the first largely precluded when God's relation to the world and to man is stated in terms of Fatherhood. The difficulty about all personal titles as applied to God is that they inevitably suggest limitations. Now theism as contrasted with pantheism, or with certain metaphysical interpretations of the nature of the Absolute, asserts limitations in respect of God : that is involved in the proposition that the distinction between good and evil is real for God, and is not, on the highest level of reality, transcended and brought to a unity. Again, the religious importance of the ascription of personality to God is that it leaves room for the reality of reciprocal personal intercourse between God and man. So we reach the conclusion that finite centres of consciousness have a standing of their own, conferred upon them, but real, in relation to God, and are not just so many points at which an infinite conscious-

ness manifests itself. And in that relationship I do not see how we can fail to admit limitation.¹ But whatever be our attitude to this question, it is obvious that if we wish to think about God in a manner which will prove religiously satisfactory and will be a help, not a hindrance, in the typically religious act of worship, we must not let our language insinuate that God is the supreme example of a class. That is one of the real drawbacks to speaking of God as a Person. It suggests that God belongs to a class, though doubtless in that class He is the greatest. Classification involves the use of the indefinite article, and the indefinite article is out of place when we speak of God. It would be far better to say that God is *the* Person.

We need to preserve the personal note in the description of God and, at the same time, to make the description as universal as possible, so that over the whole field of God's manifold relationships with the universe and with men we may feel that there is no incongruity in the

¹ This admission is quite compatible with the acceptance of Lotze's well-known argument (*Microcosmus*, ii. p. 688 (Eng. tr.)), that the perfection of personality exists in God alone.

title selected. These needs find their satisfaction in the word "Father." It is a word in no way peculiar to the Hebrew-Christian tradition, but both the monotheistic and the ethical character of that tradition gives it a distinctive place therein. The universal aspect of God's Fatherhood was emphasised by St. Paul when he spoke of every other fatherhood as gaining its name through its dependence upon the Fatherhood of God, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named. How far his thought reaches is well drawn out by Dr. Armitage Robinson in his commentary on Ephesians, where he expounds this passage : " So far from regarding the Divine fatherhood as a mode of speech in reference to the Godhead, derived by analogy from our conception of human fatherhood, the Apostle maintains that the very idea of fatherhood exists primarily in the Divine nature, and only by derivation in every other form of fatherhood, earthly or heavenly. The All-Father is the source of the fatherhood wherever it is found." ¹ The

¹ *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 84, with reference to Eph. iii. 14, 15.

Fatherhood of God is a conception in which Jew and Greek unite, though while Plato's *Timæus* expresses the truth that the supreme God is the Father of the world, the Hebrew prophets think rather of God as the Father of Israel. But the full meaning of the divine Fatherhood is not apparent till we come to the teaching of Jesus Christ and to the manner of that teaching. The richness of content and the note of assurance presume a background of religious experience, and are potent in mediating that experience, in a way which no comparison of points in His teaching with what is to be found elsewhere forbids us to describe as unique. The best in the Old Testament is gathered up in His words, and is set in a context where the national limitations do not affect the universality of the substance of the message. There are indications here and there in the Old Testament of such universality. The Book of Jonah is one instance ; Isaiah xix. 24-25, a passage of very uncertain date, in which Egypt as Jahveh's people, and Assyria as the work of His hand, are associated with Israel His inheritance, is another. But so far from the

Jews as a whole in the third and second centuries B.C. tending to a universalistic conception of God's purpose and activity towards the world, the reverse was the case, as the apocalyptic literature which is characteristic of the latter part of the period proves. Now in this connection the outstanding fact about our Lord's teaching is that it does not raise the question in any way at all. That does not conflict with the consciousness of having a mission to His own fellow-countrymen, and of the character of His work being determined by particular necessities. But in His habitual speech about God there is already given, without argument, what St. Paul was later concerned to justify by argument. I cannot see that the old Liberal tradition in Germany and in England was wrong in making so much of Christ's preaching of the universal Fatherhood of God. The error lay in finding almost His whole Gospel there. Belief in that Fatherhood is older than Christ's teaching, but He made the Fatherhood of God real and luminous and gave to faith in it a continuing power to which there is no parallel. We take a further step when we

pass from the doctrine of God's Fatherhood to Soteriology. Here the Greek tradition gives us hardly any help at all. The passage in Plato's *Statesman* which I have already noticed is very striking, but it stands alone. On the other hand, in the Bible, most intimately associated with the belief that God is the Father, is the belief that God is the God who saves. Characteristic of God is His redemptive activity. He is the God of whom cometh salvation. There are different levels of apprehension of what this means ; the insight of the Old Testament writers varies, and a clearer vision was still to come. But always prominent is the thought that in the work of salvation God is actively present, and that what He does He does because of His gracious care for those whom He succours. The verse in Hosea, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,"¹ with which may be compared the saying in the J. narrative of Exodus, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn : and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me,"² represents both that high level of

¹ Hosea xi. 1.

² Exod. iv. 22 f.

insight into God's purposes which we associate with the prophets of the eighth century, and that special stress upon God's love which gives Hosea a place of his own in the prophetic line. But it only brings to perfect expression what from the Exodus onwards was a deeply cherished conviction of Israel, that their national history began with a great act of salvation wrought by God. The critics differ widely as to the date of the Song of Moses in Exodus xv., but the important point for us does not concern the time of its composition, but whether it is a true representation of the nation's belief from the first. And that is only to be denied on the assumption that the continuity of national consciousness which the Old Testament consistently depicts is the result of the pious reflections, read back into past history, of historians, prophets, and priests of centuries later. It does not seem probable.

Salvation from physical distress, the result of foreign oppression, is the theme of a number of narratives in the historical literature, from deliverance under the Judges to the destruction of Sennacherib's army. The definite connection of God's Fatherhood with His saving

work is found only in late chapters of the Book of Isaiah lxiii. 7-9, lxiv. 16, but the peculiar relationship which binds Israel to God in terms of a covenant, which makes Israel God's people in a way that distinguishes it from all other nations, gives the substance of the other, more intimate, description. And when a more individualising tendency appears, and the thought of enemies against whom God interposes His defence is no longer dominant, the idea of preservation, with reference primarily to life and prosperity, continues to be frequent. It was natural that, when the possibility of communion with God was regarded as terminating with earthly life, God's favour should be seen especially in the prolongation of life and in the warding off of all conditions that rendered fellowship between the individual and God difficult or unattainable. "The writing of Hezekiah" after his sickness is illustrative of this, as is the eighty-eighth psalm, if it is to be interpreted of a leper's complaint. So far it might seem as though in the Old Testament the redeeming activity of God were viewed simply in relation to physical evil. But here we must

allow for what is, taken by itself, one of the limitations of the general standpoint of the Old Testament writers, though, in connection with the Hebraic emphasis upon life in the present world, it served a definitely ethical purpose. Suffering and disaster were regarded as indicating God's judgment upon moral evil and a breach of that fellowship which ensured God's protection. Strong though diverse reactions against this view appear in the later literature. There is the scepticism of Ecclesiastes, the search for a more adequate theodicy in Job, and the positive faith of Deutero-Isaiah in the value of the mission and sufferings of the servant of Jahveh. Thus the way was opened up for a profounder statement of God's method in opposition to moral evil, while the concept of salvation was enlarged by the growing belief in a life beyond death that should mean a richer fellowship with God. The context of this fellowship was developed through apocalyptic expectations of a Messianic Kingdom.

Before I say something about the dependence of Soteriology in the New Testament upon the doctrine of God, with special reference to

the Divine Fatherhood, I would suggest that it makes a good deal of difference whether we consider the problem of evil in the light of our belief in God, or the problem of God's existence and nature in the light of the fact of evil. It is, of course, true that we cannot simply choose one method and discard the other. There is a unity in the problems ; a true solution of the one will involve by direct implication a true solution of the other, and our thinking must as far as possible be unified in its process. Nevertheless, there are choices to be made both as to starting-points and in the tests we apply. And I think that not uncommonly there appears a gravely dangerous tendency to construct or to take for granted a doctrine of evil based upon the phenomena of moral and physical evil in the world, and afterwards to formulate a doctrine of God which shall be reconcilable with these phenomena. In this case no test of the sufficiency of the interpretation of the phenomena is applied from any prevenient apprehension of God's relation to the world as a whole. Thus a world-view, which itself is dependent upon the isolation of one aspect of the world, is in

possession before any real attention has been given to the doctrine of God. It may be said in reply that the method of dogmatic theologies which open with the doctrine of God and go on to the doctrine of the world and of evil beg questions before they are reached, and that we must start from known and given facts. But the particular facts, physical and moral evils, are not given in such a way as to constitute, so to speak, fixed points of value to which the whole system within which they have their place has to be adjusted. And while it implicitly excludes the idea that a certain group of phenomena gives us a regulative principle which we can confidently use for the interpretation of the world-order as a whole, the positive worth of the dogmatic method is that it tries to enable human thought to follow the order of reality, as, on the theistic hypothesis, that order must exist. For if in the real order God is not prior to the world and all that it contains, we are forced back on dualism or pantheism and have to give up, at point after point, all that has been gained in the development of religion towards genuine theism.

But if God is prior in this sense, that the world, however it came into existence, and whether we think of it as beginning in time or not, is wholly dependent for its existence upon Him, then what is true of the world will be true of everything in the world, including its evil. It will exist because God has willed the existence of a particular world-order in which evil can find a place. It will not in the least follow that He is not hostile to evil, but only that for the sake of a more ultimate good He originated a world-order which was not in itself exclusive of evil.

Of the New Testament it may be said that the world and all that is in it is viewed against the background of God's Fatherhood and of His will to overcome evil by redemptive action. The New Testament history is the history of God's method of salvation. And in different ways this salvation is linked up with the thought of God as the Father. God is the Father in Christ's teaching when He speaks of the mercy and grace with which God is always ready to receive the repentant sinner,¹ He is the Father

¹ Luke xv. 11-32 ; cf. Matt. xviii. 14.

also in Christ's consciousness of His own mission.¹ If that mission demands His death, that involves no lessening of the reality of the Divine Fatherhood, as is clear enough in view of one of the last parables, that of the Wicked Husbandman. Both St. Paul and St. John interpret the appearance and the death of Christ in terms of Fatherhood and Sonship. God spared not His only Son² ; the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.³ So for the writer to the Hebrews God's last word is His word in One, who, in contrast with the prophets, is a Son.⁴ It is not my purpose to embark on a discussion of different aspects of New Testament Soteriology, nor to enter on the question of the relation and difference between God's universal Fatherhood and His Fatherhood of Christ. What I would emphasise is that the gospel of salvation which is the content of the New Testament is rooted in the conviction of God's redemptive Fatherhood. We obtain the same impression if we consider the ideal which is open to men : That they

¹ Matt. xi. 25-27.

³ 1 John iv. 14.

² Rom. viii. 32.

⁴ Heb. i. 2.

may become the sons of God,¹ that they may recognise and address Him as Father,² that they may have the fellowship with Him which children have with a father,³—in such ways is the state of salvation described. The New Testament point of view is not how hard is the evil of the world to reconcile with the Fatherhood of God, but how certain it is that God who is the Father always wills the good of His children.

Thus the Platonic ideal of likeness to God, so far as that is possible,⁴ is given substance in the Christian presentation of that fellowship with God in which men gain the full measure of their sonship. And that fellowship is conditioned by man's recognition of God's holiness and love. As applied to God, holiness is that spiritual aspect of His transcendence wherein is given the idea of the absolute contradiction between God and evil. As such it is two-sided. On the one hand, evil is not so much the opposite of God's holiness as that which cannot exist in the presence of His holiness. Here, I

¹ John i. 12.

³ 1 John i. 3, 6.

² Rom. viii. 15 ; Gal. iv. 6.

⁴ *Theætet.* 176.

think, a place can be found for a form of that notion of St. Augustine's which he derived from the Neo-Platonists, that evil possesses no substantial existence. The only absolute reality is God, and in that reality evil has no place at all. Where evil is present there is a lower degree of reality, in Johannine language the darkness which means the withdrawal of the light. But secondly, and more positively, the holiness of God is that perfection of being which constitutes the excellence of the divine nature. And so there is revealed something which is more than an attribute, however lofty, of God, more even than the totality of moral values. So far, Otto rightly emphasises the element of "the wholly other" which man is conscious of in the presence of whatever suggests to him the holiness of God.¹ But this sense of "the wholly other" is what it is because the difference in degree between human imperfection and divine perfection is a difference in kind. Where the perfection of God is there is something with which everything else is incommensurable. This is true not only of the

¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. v.

divine goodness, but also of the divine wisdom and beauty. To bring holiness into connection with intellectual and æsthetic excellence is not to stretch the term unduly. The awe which we feel when we come across some one who in word or writing displays an understanding of deeply mysterious tendencies in human nature and a power to trace them to their source and to forecast their issue—the kind of reverence which to a pre-eminent degree Dean Church inspired,—the silence which falls upon us at some revelation of the wonder and beauty of nature or of art, is in a line with that mingled sense of adoration and shame which certain manifestations of goodness evoke. If we distinguish, we should, indeed, say that the holiness of God suggests to us primarily the moral transcendence of God, and that in the blending of human emotion and thought in relation to the holy, what Otto calls “the process of rationalisation and moralisation of the numinous”¹ has achieved its proper effects. In the primitive strata of the Old Testament literature, that moralisation is still far off, but in such a numinous experience and

¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 115.

emotion as is associated with Isaiah's call, the ethical element is the most prominent fact in the narrative. Here is revealed to us what Principal Wheeler Robinson has called "the cardinal transformation of the idea of holiness through the prophetic consciousness,"¹ and when holiness is presented as the ideal character of the nation's life, the moral implications of the conception are dominant. Yet holiness is never simply another way of describing justice, or righteousness, or even goodness. Its nearest equivalent among the virtues is purity, and to purity there attaches itself a sense of æsthetic satisfaction as well as of moral worth. Thus the introduction of the idea of holiness is a corrective as against a too narrowly moralised conception of God. It is interesting to observe the attitude taken up to it by the two systematic theologians of the Ritschlian school, Ritschl himself and Julius Kaftan. Ritschl, while not absolutely denying the validity of the idea, makes no use of it whatever in his exposition of the doctrine of God, seeing that it, "in its Old Testament sense, is for various reasons not valid in Christi-

¹ *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 156.

anity, while its use in the New Testament is obscure.”¹ Kaftan, on the contrary, ranks holiness second only to love among the divine characteristics, understanding it to mean that God is “the absolute good” or “the ethically perfect.”² In this sense Ritschl could, of course, have used it as readily as Kaftan does, and so far it might seem that they are one in meaning though differing in terminology. But Kaftan does take a step beyond moralism when he refuses simply to identify God’s holiness with His ethical perfection. As applied to God “holiness is descriptive of ethical perfection in the way in which it belongs to God, and particularly to Him as exalted above the world.”³ Even this does not seem to me quite adequate, but it enables one to understand why “holy” is of all adjectives the most suitable with which to address God in the forms of liturgical worship. The rather jaunty attitude which is sometimes adopted towards God in the religious speech of to-day is not unconnected with a loss of the sense of God’s holiness. But

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 274.

² *Dogmatik*, p. 204.

³ *Ibid.*

the richest experience of fellowship with God has never come along the lines of "He's a good fellow and 'twill all be well": it has been given to those who have entered into the truth of the prophetic word, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."¹ The virtue of humility is best understood as man's acknowledgment of the holiness of God.

Fellowship with God is also conditioned by the recognition of the fact that God is love. It is important to note that this affirmation, which occurs twice in one of the latest of the New Testament books, stands in the closest relation to Christian belief in God's revelation of Himself in Christ.² So for St. Paul, God's love is seen in the death of Christ, and for St. John in the gift of the Son.³ Moreover, the essence of the new life in the Spirit consisted in its being a life of love. Love was the inspira-

¹ Isa. lvii. 15.

² 1 John iv. 8, 16.

³ Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 9.

tion of its character, and the presence or absence of love the test of its reality. If the Christian community possessed the secret of love and exercised its power, its experience was witness to the fullest reality in God of that which was at the centre of the Church's message and of the life which accompanied the message. Primitive Christianity was no golden, faultless age, and the New Testament writers do not pretend that it was so. Yet late in the second century it was the reality of Christian love which impressed many a pagan, and Harnack, in his *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, brings a wealth of evidence to illustrate and confirm his own saying that "the new language on the lips of Christians was the language of love."¹ It was inevitable that the Christian conviction of an immeasurable debt owed to the goodness of God, and the distinctive features of the Christian life, should lead on to the full reality of love being found in its identification with God. The identification is to be thought of as absolute, and not as descriptive of what God is in relation to the world or to man. So in the

¹ Vol. i. p. 149.

idea of God as love something is given which is not necessarily or habitually given in the idea of God as Father. For the doctrine of God's Fatherhood, apart from such a text as St. Matthew xi. 25-27, and Johannine passages where the world-relationship of that Fatherhood is transcended by the supra-mundane relationship which exists between Him who is the Father and Him who is the Son, implies the consciousness of the existence of the world and man, and is, therefore, preparatory to the affirmation that God is love. And if we start from this highest point and move downwards to the existence of the world, everything that is true of God's dealings with the world from creation onwards is expressive of a love simple in character but manifold in operation, like the whiteness of light differentiated into many colours. This is the Christian account of the existence of an object-world, and the interpretation of its significance. At every stage of the world's history there is an outgoing of God, which is a self-impartation of God, which is the self-impartation of love. In his *Dogmatik*, Kaftan argues that we involve ourselves in a

never-ending circle if in answer to the question, what is the self that God imparts through the power of His love? we say that it is love. The imparted self, in Kaftan's view, is rather God's essence as eternal personal Spirit.¹ This is consistent with his classification of love as a divine characteristic or attribute, the chiefest of all. But if, as he admits, it is the spiritual will which constitutes the essence of personality, and the direction and content of God's will is love, then we pass beyond the idea of love as an attribute and can draw no distinction between God's impartation of His essence as eternal personal Spirit and the impartation of His love. His self is not less love than it is spiritual personality. Moreover, the predominance of the moral as compared with the metaphysical element in the words "God is love" makes it positively preferable to speak of God's self-impartation as one of love rather than of personal Spirit. And this is more in line with the verdict of Christian experience.

The confession that God is love represents the climax of Christian faith in God. But it is

¹ P. 200.

also the point at which the most harassing objections have to be met in any system of apologetics. Bishop Gore has told us that he has always found this belief to be the one very difficult dogma of the Christian Church.¹ And I think it is certain that no theory of a finite God will help us, unless pressed so far that the world becomes really independent of God, a conclusion which no theist can allow. Yet if the world-order is dependent both for origin and for continuance upon the will of God, and the content of that will is love, difficulties of a special kind undoubtedly arise in connection with the presence of evil in the world. The way out which many of us take is by emphasising the value of the measure of freedom with which human personalities are endowed and arguing that this gift both involves and justifies the risks which accompany it. So far as to moral evil; physical evil, it is contended, serves ends of an order higher than the physical, and offers no absolute antithesis to the love of God. Such contentions seem to me legitimate, but I think that if we lay too much stress upon

¹ *Belief in God*, p. xi.

them there is a danger of losing sight of the special values which the New Testament carries in this connection. In it the speculative problem is never raised. We have nothing which is at all equivalent to the Book of Job. But what we do have is such a concentration on God's purposes as, if I may say so, takes the problem of evil in its stride. In the world that purpose is being realised by a conscious attachment to Him through faith which stands at the beginning of a new moral and spiritual life, of which the characteristic energy is love. Through the revelation of Himself, His perfect speech in Christ, and through the abiding presence of the Spirit in believers, He has made the way for a fellowship with Himself in which men attain to the highest possible levels of knowledge and power. The ethics of the New Testament are the ethics of fellowship, of fellowship with God and not simply of the brethren with one another. We used to hear more than is the case to-day of the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount being an interim-ethic, appropriate to the time of waiting for the apocalyptic coming of the Kingdom of God,

and dependent, therefore, upon a particular eschatology. It does not appear to me to be possible to carry such an idea consistently through, nor, except by stretching the Gospels on a Procrustean bed of one's own devising in respect both of authenticity and of interpretation, to contrast, as Tyrrell did, the moral teaching of Jesus as something which was given to fit the transient conditions of the present life, to prepare for but not to constitute "the abiding substance of blessedness," with His revelation of "the speedy advent of a new world in which ethics would be superseded."¹ But there is this underlying truth in the conclusions reached by the thorough-going eschatologists in their bearing upon New Testament ethics. The ethic of the New Testament is fundamentally a religious ethic significant of and directed towards a communion with God in which goodness appears as the richly various moral expression of the new life. There is a sentence in one of the letters of Sir Henry Jones which might be written all over the moral outlook of the New Testament. "Right doing," he says,

¹ *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, pp. 50, 51.

“is an uncommonly happy way of living.”¹ And again, elsewhere, the good life is a “*joyous* achievement,” “the best that can be,” since “it has the nature of things at its back.”² For “nature of things” read God, which would not misinterpret the philosopher, and the character of the Christian life is made plain. Where it exists, there, if we took our guidance from the New Testament, we should be conscious, not of so much moral value to set off against evil, but of victory. Again let us beware of unhistorical idealisations. There were sins and doubts and sufferings for the primitive communities to wrestle with and endure, and a dark enough view of the world outside. But because they believed in the love of God, in redemption and the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s death, and in the presence in their midst of the Holy Spirit, they neither despaired of the value of moral action nor simply took refuge in eschatology. Nor were they quietists, happy in a real but narrow piety, after the fashion of Jewish circles which grew

¹ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, p. 259.

² P. 169.

up in the century and a half before Christ. However we construct the history of the evangelising work of early Christianity, reading between the lines of the narrative in Acts, it is plain that the Christian society came to preach a universal gospel which it put forward as, in theory, the Stoics did their philosophy, as satisfying the needs of all men and as an appeal to all on the basis of the equality of all before God. Primitive Christianity was not an ethical system, but not the least striking among its characteristics is its creative power in ethics. It gave to the world an ideal and an inspiration which are, at the same time, the most searching moral challenge ever delivered. It freed morality from the bonds of legalism, while preserving its religious reference, and deepened that by emphasising the positive element in ethics as the way of life wherein the spirit of man was led by the Spirit of God. It is not just a formal connection between Christian doctrine and Christian morals which makes the retention of the latter so difficult when the former is abandoned. Christian ethics are the working out in character and in conduct of

that religious world-view to which Christianity is entirely committed. They are the practical avowal, under the circumstances of earthly life, of the truth of God's holiness and love as revealed in Christ and, as possessing an eternal value in God's eyes, they derive their significance from what God is to man and man may become to God. This is the explanation of that so constantly recurring transition in St. Paul's epistles from the theological to the moral ; it lies behind the exhortations of the Epistle to the Hebrews ; and nowhere is the interfusion of religion and morality so perfectly exhibited as in the First Epistle of St. John.

But besides the Christian life there was the Christian hope. Two facts had made the problem of eschatology an increasingly important one in later Judaism. One was the loss of national independence which led to the apocalyptic vision of supernatural intervention, a looking-forward not simply to the overthrow of foreign and ungodly tyrants, but to the end of the world-order as it then was, and the substitution for it of a supernatural order. All sorts of differences appeared in connection with

the general idea, differences as to the relation of heavenly and earthly elements, as to the revelation of the Messiah and the character of the Messianic Kingdom, as to resurrection and judgment and final destiny.¹ But the various schemes reveal the mingling of pessimism and hope in the minds of their architects, and, as the essence of the hope, the conviction that God will intervene in such a way that the course of history must come to an end, and a new age be established. The other fact, closely associated, was the growth of belief in personal immortality as something utterly different from mere continuance of existence away from God in the underworld. Both these facts are in close relation to faith in God as One who will vindicate His righteousness, whose action will be a self-justification, a theodicy. And however remote from ourselves in their way of thinking are the Apocalyptic writers, and however much we feel that the desire for vengeance on foreign enemies and on the ungodly is far too prominent a factor in their systems, yet we

¹ For a useful synopsis, see Appendices I. and II. in *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, by J. H. Leckie.

must recognise in them the profound desire to portray a consummation of the world-order, even though it involved a destruction of it, which should show that, after all, the only purpose which could come to fulfilment was the purpose of God.

Eschatology is part of the doctrine of God. It is not first and foremost a statement about human destiny. The hope of the future is presented in the New Testament, as in the Jewish apocalypses, in more ways than one. The Kingdom, Life, the glorious Church, the heavenly city, are all phrases unveiling the end by selection of a particular form under which it was possible for the end to be described. But the end is never regarded as the furthest term of the world-process. The stress is always on the divine activity. Through it the end will come. But we must also allow for the further thought : the end is not simply in the future. The experience of the first Christians was conceived of as an experience of spiritual reality wherein the essence of the blessedness of the age to come was already present, to be known and enjoyed and used. That was why

a fall to the lower level of Judaism was a danger in face of which the writer to the Hebrews felt it necessary to give the most serious warnings. It is not difficult to understand the early-Christian attitude when we remember that though the fullness of the Messianic age would not come till the return of Jesus in glory, yet the faith in Jesus as the Messiah meant that a revelation had already been made of the character of that age in respect of its central Figure. So in the relationship between primitive Christian experience and the theological fabric which began to rise along with it to give it its proper conceptual environment, we may constantly descry an eschatological influence. The Spirit, the Church, the Sacraments, Justification, the New Life are not to be understood in their meaning for the New Testament writers and for the Christian circles of the time unless we lay stress on the revelation of the method and character of God's purposes to be gained through them. And yet, it is not a purely eschatological outlook which is manifested. Ethical values, real for this age and persisting beyond it, make their presence felt.

The more intent the Church became on an evangelising mission as wide as the known world, the more real did the spiritual value and moral testimony of the fruits of the mission appear. "The Kingdom of God," says St. Paul, "is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹ But still the eschatological hope persisted, and the prayer "Thy Kingdom come" was not centred in the longing for a perfect moral and social order here on earth.

It is extraordinarily difficult to do justice both to ethics and to eschatology. Yet there is this encouragement : it is another form of the difficulty which arises when we try to appreciate the value of time while believing that it is transcended in eternity, or of human virtue while conceiving of it as nothing apart from divine grace, or of man as free and yet never independent of God. I think these paradoxes are inevitable in a religion which like that of the New Testament makes so much of man and everything of God ; and that no road has more certainly to be retraced than that of abstract simplification which finds a solution by omitting

¹ Rom. xiv. 17.

or mis-stating elements in the problem. And these are essential elements—the reality and richness of the moral life and the majestic instancy of the divine purpose. But the whole meaning of the process, and its unity—I do not see how that can be known before the end, nor how in our thoughts and hopes we can do better than make our own the word of Lady Julian, “His wisdom and His love suffers not the end to come till the best time.”

III

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THERE are certain features of religious thought which are apt to recur at different times and in connection with different systems of belief and worship. One is the tendency towards some form of pantheistic doctrine which asserts the identity of the universe with God, and explains the variety and distinction of form and consciousness and action, which are given in and to experience, as relative and finite modes of being in which the absolute and infinite unity finds particular self-expression. We must allow for much latitude in the use of the term, and for the appearance of widely separate and even sharply contrasted consequences, according to the views taken of the character of the basal unity and as the emphasis is thrown upon the pan- or upon the -theism in the keyword. Just to give one instance:—"spirit" is one of the

greatest words in the Hegelian philosophy ; it is also a word which Ernst Haeckel insisted on as necessary when he came to construct his world-view. Neither matter without spirit, nor spirit without matter is, put shortly, his affirmation. But if " pantheistic " is an adjective properly attributable to the conception of the universe framed a hundred years ago by the metaphysician, and within our time by the biologist (as to the latter the description is certainly in place, as to the former the Hegelian experts must judge), it is certain that " spirit " has not at all the same meaning for the one as it has for the other. Haeckel's idea of spirit as the space-filling mobile æther would hardly have been recognised as the poorest of poor relations to that idea and exposition of spirit which finds a place in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, an idea which I can realise as being exceeding magnificent, though, perhaps through not having been educated at the University of Oxford, I cannot pretend that I find it at all easy to understand.

But all such questions we may leave over. The attraction which underlies every sort of pantheism, every vague tendency which, carried

to its furthest limits, ends in pantheism, is the attraction of an absolute unity which seems to smooth out all difficulties by ridding us of all final distinctions. It is this attraction which, I should suppose, finds satisfaction in the province of the feelings in what is known as cosmic emotion. Now there are a number of criticisms of pantheism which seem to me valid, but upon these I do not wish to comment. What does need some emphasising is that the Christian doctrine of God is one thing and pantheism is another, and that our very hard-worked friend "the higher synthesis" has no work to do in this connection. The New Testament gives us real contrasts, and, as an ideal, a real unity which, at the same time, never allows us to say "This is that and that is this." Neither the New Testament experience nor the New Testament theology is compatible with the phrase, "For Thou art I, and I am Thou," found in three successive prayers quoted by Reitzenstein in his work *Poimandres*,¹ of which the title is taken from one of the most important books of the

¹ Pp. 15-21. The prayers are addressed to Hermes, and are found in magical papyri.

Hermetic Literature. Such identity between God and the worshipper, or any identification of God with the world, is right off the line of New Testament piety and thought. Pantheism, on the other hand, gives us an eternally existing unity of the world with God, with no real contrasts but a variety of transient manifestations. The unities with which the New Testament is concerned are personal, moral, and teleological, and its teleology is not that of a formal argument from design, but of a vision of the perfection of personal moral communion with God to which the real but imperfect communion possible under the conditions of earthly life points forward. Thus the Christian interpretation of the relation of God to the universe allows of a reality being ascribed to the notions of process and development which is markedly absent from pantheism. Of the universe as conceived pantheistically one can only say, "The more it changes, the more it remains the same." But that is not true of the universe as we construe it on the basis of Christian theology. There are real advances and additions ; moral results are achieved and

moral values gained. The word "new" is one of the most significant words of the New Testament. "A new creation" ¹; "old things are passed away; yea, they are become new" ²; "Behold, I make all things new" ³; "new heavens and a new earth" ⁴; "the new man" ⁵—such phrases suggest the very opposite of all notions of a given block-universe in which no place is to be found for freedom and movement and for their consequences. We may state it in another way if we say that the Christian doctrine of God not only allows of but compels the thought of God's redeeming action in a manner to which there is no parallel in pantheism. That lyric passage in which St. Paul speaks of creation's destiny to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God ⁶ centres in the prophetic hope and assurance of a world-order which at every point shall reveal the fulfilment of its own age-long desire. We must be careful lest we press too far conceptions of the universe based on the value of adventure

¹ Gal. vi. 15.

³ Rev. xxi. 5.

⁵ Eph. iv. 24.

² 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 1.

⁶ Rom. viii. 21.

and risk. A universe which could end in the defeat of God's purposes, so that its epic would be an epic of evil, would fail to conform to the New Testament apprehension of sovereignty and redemption as two words unchallengeably descriptive of God's supremacy over the world and of His will and power to make its final order good. In Christian theology there can be no doubt as to the character of the end. But that does not involve any lack of reality in the struggle between good and evil. On the contrary, the moral consummation is not reached except through costly effort, and at the heart of the Christian doctrine of God's dealings with the world is the conviction, proclaimed as a gospel, that the costliest effort has been made by God Himself. For such high peaks of moral endeavour and achievement pantheism has no place. The rejection of pantheism means the refusal to dispense with the notion of God's transcendence; it involves, moreover, the belief that if we push the idea of immanence so far that clear discriminations as to the character and extent of the divine indwelling become impossible, we shall lose the real values of

immanence itself. The increased stress upon divine immanence and the abandonment of all deistic modes of thinking, in which we ought gratefully to acknowledge the contributions made, not avowedly to that end, but none the less unmistakably, from the side of modern science, may seem to tell in favour of a pantheistic theology. Yet it is necessary to insist that so far from pantheism being the logical issue of a doctrine of immanence, it represents a quite different construction in respect of God and the world from one in which the idea of immanence has a right place. The thought which underlies pantheism is that of the universe as a physical system ; the thought which underlies the doctrine of immanence is that of God's presence with His creation in such ways as will promote the attainment by creation of the ideal possible to it.

In the New Testament the idea of immanence which is implied is one which derives its cogency from the belief that as God is the Creator and the Final Cause, so in the process which lies between the beginning and the consummation God is the Agent within the

process, whereby its highest possibilities are made actual, and its explanation is seen to lie in the moral response to God and in the spiritual fellowship with Him which God Himself inspires. Not only "of" and "to" Him, but "through" Him are all things, and the doxology of which these words form a part comes at the end of a long passage in which St. Paul has been expounding the manner in which God makes the course of history work to the fulfilment of His purposes.¹ The stress laid upon the importance of the historical order differentiates Catholic Christianity from every type of religious or philosophical thought which depreciates the value of history and even at times goes so far as to regard it as the region of illusion. But this emphasis does not spring from or imply the unconvincing idea that God has used history for the purpose of giving evidence of Himself by interpolating into the historical order a certain number of facts unaccountable except by reference to Him. It is the result of the conviction that history is the field of moral revelation to which no justice can be

¹ Rom. xi.

done by the notion of a God acting upon history from without, but only by the recognition of Him as manifested, or rather manifesting Himself, within the whole movement.

In line with this is the New Testament doctrine of the Incarnation as stated by St. Paul and St. John, of the mystical unity between the believer and Christ, describable in terms either of the indwelling of Christ in men or of Christians as being in Christ, and the richness, far surpassing the Old Testament, of the theology of the Spirit which rises out of an experience of divine guidance and power, itself illuminative of the meaning of the facts about Jesus. The Epistle to the Ephesians and the Johannine writings are fruitful in their witness to the reality of a divine indwelling conceived of, not abstractly, but in relation to that enlarged vision of God's purposes for man. This carried with it, as one great result, the religious equality, under the new conditions, of Gentile with Jew, and so shattered the one great obstacle to a Catholic Church. Here a difference reveals itself. The theology of immanence, as a subject belonging to a religious

world-view in general and not concerned with the particular features of an historical religion, is to be associated with the conceptions of natural law, and of the rationality of that system in which man finds himself and which, by responding to the demands which he makes upon it shows itself to be an articulated body and not a number of *disiecta membra*. Moreover, by its help the æsthetic character of the universe is rendered intelligible, since beauty then appears as the sign of God's presence, expressing in appropriate manner the goodness of the Power whence creation derives its bare existence. Yet if there is little of this in the New Testament, except for a reference to the secret of cosmic order in Colossians and Hebrews as subsisting in the Son and sustained by Him, and a possible interpretation in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel of creation as alive in the Son,¹ that involves no disparagement of the worth of the idea of immanence in philosophical theism. But in the New Testament, the dominant point of view is that of Christian experience. History

¹ St. John i. 3, 4 ; if punctuated and translated so as to give the sense, " that which hath been made was life in Him."

presented itself as a moving panorama in which was descried the presence of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Spirit. Only there was at first no tendency to impart into the picture an undue precision by supposing the existence of strictly limited epochs, to each of which one and only one form of divine self-revelation applied. That is what the Sabellian theology did at a later period, and it pressed so far the idea of God's presence in the world-order under that particular character or *prosôpon* which God wore at this or that epoch as to be in danger of giving a merely provisional or relative value to the idea itself. For in place of the presence and progressive self-manifestation of the One God throughout the historical order, treated as a unity, there are successive and transient appearances of God under different names, each name in turn involving the disappearance of the name that has preceded it and, with the name, the epoch in which the name possessed its limited truth.

Sabellianism is instructive. It attempts to give a comprehensive account of God's relationship to the world, and possesses elements

which might have been used to serve the purpose of a pantheistic system ; yet, on the other hand, if attention is directed to the divine background from which the successive *prosôpa* emerge, a dark abyss of Godhead which is the one abiding reality, the style of the theology changes into that of a remote deism, in which the gulf between God and the world is never bridged. Our sources are fragmentary and the whole question is difficult. I am not sure that it would be wholly wide of the mark to describe Sabellianism as relatively pantheistic and ultimately deistic. But what I would point out is that while the notion of God's transcendence can stand for that sheer contrast between God and the world which has at times found satisfaction, both in theology and in the descriptions of mystical experience, in an apotheosis of the word " not," as of the one word which is never out of place when man tries to say what God is, it can also be used to express that aspect of the divine life which, so far from suggesting to us negations, is the source of our most firmly based confidence, the fountain of our desire for communion with God. And it is in this way

that the New Testament brings before us God's transcendence. Not by thinking away now this now that attribute as not properly applicable to God, but by thinking of a positive inexhaustible wealth of goodness as the fullness of the divine nature, shall we attain to some understanding of transcendence. Once again, the New Testament approach is from the side of man's religious history and its interpretation. Man, left to himself, is weak and sinful. Goodness is not in his power. But in God there is a limitless source of power, and no demands which man can make upon God are too great for God to satisfy. "Have faith in God"¹; "only believe"²; such exhortations to faith as to the one thing needful, that man may be able to realise that the word "impossible" is a word of no meaning where his relations with God enter in,³ rest upon the knowledge of God as of One whose majesty is as His mercy. Into a world full of supposed magical influences, exposed, as it was widely held, to the control of evil powers, astral and demonic, and unable to break free from the

¹ Mark xi. 22.² Mark v. 36.³ Cf. Mark ix. 23.

iron circle of fate, came the New Testament with a message about God which cut away the whole basis of contemporary superstition. To the God who was able to do exceeding abundantly above all that men could ask or think there was free approach which no hostile powers were able to prevent. The philosophical idea of transcendence emphasises the contrast between God and all that is not God ; it involves the belief that whereas the world as created is contingent and is not of itself a spirit possessing self-consciousness, intelligent will and purpose and moral character, God is in His own nature all this. There can be no doubt of the New Testament agreement with this account of transcendence. But remoteness, aloofness, inaccessibility, are characteristics which we should never ascribe to God, with the New Testament to guide us. The language of adoration such as we find near the end of the First Epistle to Timothy, " who only hath immortality, dwelling in light to which there is no approach, whom no man hath seen nor can see," ¹ would, if taken by itself, suggest such

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

notions ; but no such meaning is intended. Immediately afterwards comes the injunction to trust in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy. That note occurs again and again. It is to be heard in our Lord's assurances : " The very hairs of your head are numbered " ¹ ; " not one sparrow falleth to the ground apart from your Father " ² ; in St. Paul's knowledge that all things work together for good to them that love God ³ ; in St. John's conviction of the effectiveness of prayer, " if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." ⁴ And more than this can be said. The New Testament has the same idea of God's moral transcendence, of His perfect holiness, as has the Old. But in the New Testament man is represented, as he is not in the earlier literature, as endowed with power to share in that transcendence by virtue of the capacity given to him to become a new creation and to find his real environment, not in the world at all, but in

¹ Matt. x. 30.

³ Rom. viii. 28.

² Matt. x. 29.

⁴ 1 John v. 15.

God. This is the relevance of that most striking contrast in the Epistle to the Hebrews between the experience of Israel at Sinai and the present experience of Christians.¹ Israel was conscious of unapproachable majesty. There was no desire to pass beyond the appointed limits. Even Moses, whose office it was to draw near to God, did so with no glad confidence, but in fear and trembling. But to the people of the new covenant the warning is given not to draw back. In the presence of more wonderful mysteries than any revealed at Sinai, it should be their joy to know that they have come so far. It is not the future hope but the present possession which the writer has in mind. So for St. Paul Christians are already citizens of heaven, where God has raised them, above the evil and deadness of the old order to which they once belonged, to take their places by reason of their union with Christ.² The sarcasm which at times breaks out from St. Paul when he compares, whether by implication or openly, the high pretensions of the Corinthians with the grave faults and abuses

¹ Heb. xi. 18-24.

² Phil. iii. 20 ; Col. iii. 1, 3.

present in their Church, is not due to any criticism of their claim as Christians to have the secret of a life higher and different as contrasted with that to be found outside the community, but to the incompatibility of facts in their moral behaviour with that claim. That the life of the believer has passed into the transcendent sphere of the divine life is also the meaning of the language of the new birth, of the Johannine reference to the seed which is in believers and the anointing which is theirs,¹ and of the phrase used by the writer of the Second Epistle of Peter, which in form goes beyond anything to be found elsewhere in the New Testament, "being partakers of the divine nature," with which he associates the escape from the corruption which is in the world by lust.²

This conception of the Christian, as in the world, yet above the world, rests on belief in the divine transcendence. And I think it is worth while to note how strikingly this fact of the divine life is suggested to us in the New Testament. The writers were men whose view of the structure of the world was that of

¹ 1 John iii. 8 ; ii. 20.

² 2 Pet. i. 4.

pre-Copernican days. They lived in an atmosphere of religious syncretism when it was not difficult for mystical and even magical elements in religion to take precedence over moral ones. And even conservative scholars would be chary of arguing that contemporary theosophy has left no traces of its influences in our canonical books. And yet how little it all amounts to as compared with what any one familiar with the tendencies of that age might expect. How solidly and consistently ethical does the doctrine of God remain, how free it is from those wild speculations whereby the Gnostics transformed Christianity into a kind of metaphysical mythology and hid the transcendent God away behind a multitude of æons. Hippolytus has preserved for us the account of the origin of things given by Basilides, one of the most eminent of the Gnostic teachers: "The God-who-was-not made the cosmos from things which were not, casting down the non-existent seed of the cosmos."¹ There you have language strained

¹ *Philosophumena*, vii. 21. Translation by F. Legge. I have arranged the sentence so as to bring out the full force of Basilides' teaching.

past breaking-point to give an idea of God's absolute transcendence. In the New Testament we hear of "your Father which is in heaven," of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And when we read of "heaven," who imagines that it is relevant to remind ourselves of the differences between pre- and post-Kantian conceptions of space? Any one who reads the New Testament with no more than the readiness to let it speak its message will find in it the truth of the transcendence of God, though he may know nothing about problems of space. And at the same time that transcendence is not the supremacy of an impersonal principle, such as the moral law. Once again the strength and balance of the New Testament doctrine are closely connected with the character of the religion as one of revelation in history. The Son of God had come into the world, and the purpose of His coming and of the Father's will in sending Him was that the world through Him might be saved. The greatness of the love that was then poured out, the knowledge of God's glory that had been given in the face of Jesus Christ,

called forth the strain of praise and thanksgiving, so deep and constant in the New Testament, which testifies to profound gratitude for God's generosity, and to profound wonder at His condescension. Any formal theology which tried to keep in line with primitive Christian feeling would never be content to make little of the reality and value of the transcendence of God.

The Christian theology of incarnation and atonement, whenever it has been true to the sources of its inspiration, has found the starting-point for its understanding of the divine action to be the realisation of the divine love. The great love wherewith He loved us—that is the one sufficient account, not only of the whole character of the action but of the impulse at work in it. From this side we may approach a further question which arises in connection with the doctrine of God, the question how, and with what meaning, may we think of God as free? This is not a matter of small importance, for, on the one hand, if the origin and development of the world-order is regarded as exhibiting a necessary process, so that the

whole idea of contingency and of the possibility of there never having been a world-order at all is excluded, God and the world-order must be regarded as correlatives, and we are left, not with a single unity, God, but with God plus the world-order. Thus God by Himself would be incomplete apart from the world, and the world be as necessary to Him as He to the world. But if this is the case, gratitude to God as the good Creator would seem to disappear, and if the world as a whole necessarily exists, a measure of necessity will apply to the existence of elements in the world, and the system will take on markedly pantheistic features. On the other hand, the idea of freedom when applied to God cannot be construed as implying that out of an infinite number of possibilities God chose one and so brought the world-order into existence. Duns Scotus argued that some of the positive commandments of the moral law were contingent in this sense, that while, the world being what it was, they could not have been of a different character, God might, had He so willed, have made a different kind of world in which they would have been

irrelevant.¹ But even this is difficult ; for it seems to imply that God was free to produce whatever world-order He chose, and that apart from the determining action of His will one was as possible as another. If that is the case, what security have we for the moral character of the world-order as it exists ? For this rests on our belief that as God is good, so He made a good world-order to exist, and that whatever account be given of the existence of evil, God did not make the world morally inferior to what He might have made it. To draw back from such a belief is to open the way for a doctrine of God which will deviate at a critical point from the common faith of the Old Testament and the New.

Help is to be found in the Platonic idea of the good, enriched by the Christian emphasis upon God as love. Goodness and love are, in our experience, ideals which, as we attain to them, are no longer external to us, but become part of our nature. And in becoming part of our nature they bring into it a harmony which suggests that between our nature and these

¹ See article, "Scholasticism," in *E.R.E.*, vol. xi. p. 246.

ideals there is an inner correspondence which needs to be made actual and living, but possesses, even before that, a moral value. In God who is Himself Goodness and Love, the ideal and the actual form a perfect unity which can never be broken at any point, as it would be broken if in God's action something less than perfect goodness and perfect love were expressed. And so viewing the matter we must say that God is unchangeable, since that is only to maintain that it is inconceivable that God should either be moved from that perfect identification of the possible with the actual by any force external to Himself, or that He should will anything which does not admit of the presence in the act of will of the perfection of His nature. But the reality of freedom in God is not thereby given up. God's freedom no more involves His freedom to do evil than His omnipotence involves His power to do everything. It makes no sense to say that God who is one with the idea of the good and with love is free to will evil, since in such an act of will He would cease to be perfect goodness and love.

But I think we can go further. In so far as

the measure of independence of God which the world possesses through God's appointment, an independence which ensures the reality of the pursuit of moral ends, is perverted into an unethical carelessness of God and indifference to His will, a situation arises which can be dealt with only if God's redemptive resources are as real as His creative power. At this point we need a conception of God which combines with the thought of His unchangeable nature and constant purpose the recognition that God is not confined within any one channel of activity for His saving work. God does not manifest Himself in the same way at all times ; just as, in the old phrase, God is not bound by His sacraments, so there is no one sole way whereby He can bring back the world into the line of co-operation with His purposes for it. "There are," says St. Paul, "diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all."¹ "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth"² : it may be that we should gain a deeper and more reliable hope in the face of all that speaks of opposition to God's purposes, if

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 6.

² John iii. 8.

we were less inclined, almost unconsciously, to fix the methods and bounds of God's action. It may be hard to reconcile the idea of God's constantly varying activity within the world-order with that of His eternal unchangeableness in a life of His own which is undisturbed by the advancing and receding tides of that order. And some would appear to be prepared to dispense with whatever suggests a static notion of God, in the interests of one always describable as dynamic. But if we grasp both horns of this apparent dilemma we may avoid being impaled upon either. There is no reason to give up the belief in the eternal quiescence of God which is so impressive in Aristotle. Only we should say that that belongs to the divine life in and for itself, in abstraction from all world-relationships, and that while it is real, it is not, as Aristotle seems to have thought, the whole reality of the divine life. We must also take account of the reality of the relationship of God to the world-order, which is His creation. And while the richness of those relationships may altogether surpass our power to imagine or describe, they must be such as

are generally compatible with the world-order as something possessing a determinate nature and not merely fluid. I doubt whether this is at all recognised in the apparently religious expectations that God can at any moment produce any effect within the world-order. Is not God the one true and free cause? I do not want to raise the question of miracles at this point, nor do I believe that it is at all necessary to do so. It seems to me sufficient to say that in any action of God relative to an individual person, fact, or circumstance, we must allow for something more than an individual significance, for some kind of reaction, however indirect, upon the world-order as a whole. The multiplication of such actions of God relative to individuals as involved continual changes and readjustments in the world-order as a whole would leave us finally with a world-order on which we could not count, and which, as far as I can see, would have less moral value or possibility of achieving it than that in which we live. If it be said that this strikes at man's right to believe in answers to prayer, the reply is that answers to prayer fall within the world-

order and react upon that order, and that is true both of affirmative answers to prayer and of those answers in which, as the little girl remarked, "God said No." Owing to the interpenetration of the moral and the physical, and the impossibility of isolating the individual, while prayer is often entirely concerned with the individual, the question of prayer and answers to prayer raises problems of special complexity : these will not, however, be disturbing, as long as we see why they must exist.

In the New Testament the character of God's dealing with the world, conceived of according to the highest levels of Old Testament thought, yet surpasses those levels in the fact that the doctrine of Christ and of the Spirit is most closely associated with the doctrine of God and gives an enlarged view of the divine life and of that life as manifested to the world. Augustine's saying that the Old Testament is fully revealed —*patet*—in the New is specially relevant in this connection. The Messianic hope in the older literature is that of the culmination of Israel's history in an epoch when the ideal relationship of the nation with God will be

fulfilled in a theocracy of which the representative figure will be the Messianic King. The historical point of attachment to which the writers of the Old Testament linked their expectations for the future was the reign of David. The Psalter, says Dr. Nairne, is "full of David"; for the Psalmists he was the king who "had reigned in a golden age on which imagination played, . . . who"—and this meant more to them—"would come again in the person of a divine successor to reign at the last days in the holy Kingdom of God."¹ In the New Testament, the Messianic hope as a hope proper to Israel as a nation is universalised, so that, finding its fulfilment in Jesus, it brings a world-wide message of salvation. The faith which identified Jesus with the promised Messianic King lived on, and the Christian Church refused to surrender the belief in the unity of its life with that of Israel, but thought of history as existing in two stages, a stage of preparation and a stage of fulfilment, since "all the prophets from Samuel and onwards, as many as have spoken, have foretold these

¹ *Every Man's Story of the Old Testament*, p. 272.

days.”¹ But a conception of the meaning of the Person of Jesus, more universal than could easily find a place in the title of “Messiah,” was a practical necessity. Such a conception was given in the description of Jesus as the Son. Here, too, the Old Testament helped. Israel was God’s Son, and the promise to David concerning David’s successor was, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son,”² a promise which reappears in a different form in the definitely Messianic context of the second psalm. Moreover, the word “Son” was one which had the advantage of a place in the earliest written records of the Christian Church, where it was closely associated with the mind and utterance of Jesus Himself. If Professor Burkitt’s argument in his lectures here last year holds good, it is improbable that phraseology which we find in the early chapters of Acts points to a yet more primitive stage when Jesus was spoken of as the Servant of Jahveh.³

¹ Acts iii. 24.

² 2 Sam. vii. 14.

³ *Christian Beginnings*, pp. 39 f. Professor Burkitt says, “I venture to claim that the whole of what may for convenience be

But, it may be asked, what has this to do with the doctrine of God? Is not the true key to the understanding of the term "Son" in reference to Jesus to be found through the recollection of its moral, not metaphysical meaning? And so we find ourselves faced with that recurring question, in which the whole character of Christianity as a creed is involved. Does not the Christian doctrine of God owe its particular form to the intrusion of the metaphysics of a bygone age?

To deal with this question and to explore the consequences dependent upon the answer given to it would require a course of lectures devoted to that end alone. I feel almost as though an apology were needed for introducing it at a point where there is opportunity for only a brief attention to its main substance. But it is impossible for one who tries to speak of the doctrine of God from the historical and theological standpoint not to say something about

called the *παῖς θεοῦ* Christology, the theory that sees in the passages about 'The Servant of the Lord' in the latter half of Isaiah a prophecy of Jesus and His career is . . . the work of Greek-speaking believers, and therefore did not proceed from the earliest Christian circle, including the Apostles, which was, of course, an Aramaic-speaking community."

the doctrine of the Trinity, or, to adopt the language of the Nicene Creed, about the belief in One God the Father Almighty, and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God . . . of one substance with the Father, and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, and (as the West adds) from the Son.

The doctrine of the Trinity arises immediately out of the Christo-centric character of the Christian religion as a religion in which the fullness of divine grace is regarded as mediated through Jesus Christ, and the life congruous to the central point of the creed as the effect of the working of a Holy Spirit whose presence in the community of believers is the guarantee of the validity of its faith and the bond of union between the community and Christ. In the New Testament, so far as the beliefs and experiences of the Christian community can be expressed doctrinally, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, belong to the doctrine of God, since the God-consciousness of the community does not drop to a lower level, nor does it

become attenuated, when that consciousness suggests rather a consciousness of Christ or of the Spirit. God or the Father, and the Lord, and the Spirit, represent in the New Testament, in connection with the first beginnings of a distinctive Christian religion and Christian experience, divine realities with all of which the community and individual believers are concerned. Not one is dispensable, and in the case of Each a distinctive relationship to the community is implied. The historic purpose of God for Israel, and the covenant between Him and a chosen people, comes to new life in the community as the Israel of God. For it the Son died, and upon it the Spirit was outpoured. And the unity of the whole divine action is notably expressed in St. Paul's words, backed by their historic context, in Galatians iv. 4-6, "God sent forth His Son . . . that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father." So what we call the *doctrine* of the Trinity is presented to us as

community-experience which itself arises out of a particular historical situation. To forget this and to consider it simply as rationalisation of certain data, or, in still more remote connection with the New Testament, as speculative theology setting itself to the task of exposition of truth about the divine nature as it exists in and for itself in abstraction from the world, is both to miss the guidance which can be derived from the New Testament in this connection and to be in danger of substituting for the rich content of its religion an impoverished world-view, the importance of which it becomes difficult to appreciate. This is not to say that a speculative treatment of problems involved in the belief that we do not attain to a realisation of the fullness of God unless we think of Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is valueless or illegitimate; but as it was not by any such method that the foundations of the doctrine were laid, so to lay the principal stress there is to lose touch with the spiritual interests of the New Testament. What stands out most clearly in the New Testament is that the blessings associated with the work of Christ and the

activity of the Spirit are blessings which belong to, and elevate man to, that level on which he gains the assurance that communion with God is both the purpose of life and a present possession. In the Johannine writings, where again and again the use of the terms "the Father," "the Son" is revelatory of the idea of the divine nature to be found therein, the element in religious experience to which special attention is drawn as both a need which must be satisfied if man is to gain the true end of his existence, and as involved in religious knowledge, is fellowship. The relation in which the religious experience, in its characteristic stresses, and as a development within the Church, stands to the teaching of Jesus and to the facts of His life as the earliest sources represent them, is one of the great problems with which the student of the New Testament is concerned. It is a point demanding treatment from the historical and the psychological sides, and from neither in isolation from the other. But when we note the kind of experience which has left its mark so deeply on the New Testament, and the treatment of that religious experience as a formal

source of rational theology (which is what, in effect, happened when the canon of the New Testament was formed), we realise the existence of conditions very favourable to the construction of a Christian Trinitarian doctrine of God. Moreover, viewed in this way, the doctrine may intelligibly be described as a revealed doctrine, without raising critical questions which arise in connection with particular texts. In so far as the idea of revelation can be used in the interpretation of the religious phenomena of the New Testament as of the Old, any greater wealth of religious content in the New Testament, with reference to God's nature and His self-manifestation, is to be explained by the significance which attaches to the belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and to the fuller apprehension of the power of the Spirit. In his book, *Eternal Life*, Baron Von Hügel refers to "the noblest root and flower of the Jewish-Christian religion . . . the sense of *Givenness*, of grace, of dependence upon a Reality other and higher than ourselves, singly or collectively." ¹ Of such Givenness the New Testament

¹ P. 385.

bears the stamp from beginning to end. The New Testament as an evangel pledges the possibility of man's power to attain to the knowledge of God and of righteousness by the fact of God's prevenience in His gifts which themselves supply the light and power for their use. St. Paul immediately corrects himself when he has appeared to place the beginnings of true religious service in his converts' finding of God. "Now that ye have come to know God," he says, "or rather to be known of God"¹; and when he thinks of the ideal before him and of the perfection which its achievement would imply, that which stimulates him to appropriate it is the recollection that he himself has been appropriated by Christ Jesus.² As the Old Testament is the history of God's dealings with Israel, the New is the history of what He does in the creation and the early life of the spiritual Israel.

The considerations which I have put before you seem to me one true line to follow in the approach to the Trinitarian theology of the Christian creed and to what is sometimes called,

¹ Gal. iv. 9.

² Phil. iii. 12.

though I think the expression is misleading, its metaphysics. Of course, if there were an absolute rift between the faith and experience of the Apostolic age and the mind of Jesus, if the attitude involved therein were inconsistent with the self-revelation of Jesus during His life on earth, if, indeed, we could not speak of any such self-revelation at all, the connection between the history, the experience, and the creed would be so loosened that the validity of the last named could be maintained only by those who were able to accept the apologetics of the continental modernism of two decades ago. Alternatively, the doctrine of the Trinity might be transformed into a genuine metaphysic after the manner of Hegel's treatment of it in his *Philosophy of Religion*. But it is well within the limits of cautious statement to say that the need for such drastic change has not been established, or shown to be likely to be established, by the general tendency of New Testament criticism and the study of Gospel-origins.

Before I bring these lectures to a close, I wish to suggest that certain problems which

concern and trouble the modern mind in respect of the doctrine of God receive, not indeed a full philosophical solution, but real illumination when the New Testament is allowed to contribute all that is inherent in its religious character. First of all, let us return for a moment to the question which has already been before us of the static and the dynamic in God, while approaching it from a somewhat different angle. Granted that we cannot eliminate the static in reference to God, must we not try to preserve the thought of progressive experience as a fact of the divine life, so that that life is continually enriching itself by the experiences which are involved in the relationships which it has with the world? Must we not, when we think of God, think of what Sir Henry Jones described in the phrase, 'A moving Absolute'?¹

It is a metaphysical problem, and for a metaphysical solution we cannot go to the New Testament. But the New Testament and the Old also seem to me to suggest the true character of the answer by the attention they

¹ *Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, p. 175.

devote to God's dealings with men as implying real differences not only in the divine action but in the divine feeling. That is pre-eminently clear within the field of moral approval and disapproval. Ritschl tried to reduce the idea of the divine anger to a mere form of subjective consciousness on the part of man, but not only is it impossible to arrive at such a conclusion from the New Testament, but, if Ritschl were correct at this point, we should be brought back along the line to such a conception of God's metaphysical unchangeableness as that against which Ritschl strongly protested. If the coming of the Kingdom of God is the end whose coming means the realisation of God's purpose, then, however the temporal process of its coming, of advances, hindrances, achievements, and failures is related to the eternity characteristic of the divine life, all that belongs to the process, at the various points in the process, inclusive of all the persons who are continually, in all sorts of ways, acting upon and contributing to the process, while they are swept along in it, possesses a reality for God which explains the ascription

to Him of an emotional life. The attainment of real values in the universe, in the course of which the life of God is, without ceasing, going forth to interpenetrate the life of the world, is an experience in which God both gives and receives. He is not the unmoved spectator of a drama to the making of which He contributes nothing, nor can we think that in Him moral judgment is wholly unaccompanied by any element of feeling. And certainly, with the New Testament to guide us, we cannot surrender the thought of the reality of God's moral judgments, not only final, but continuous.

And that leads on to the further question of (to use the modern expression) "a suffering God." The great danger of serious misuse of this idea lies in conceiving of God's life as so completely linked up with the world-process that no real independence of it can be attributed to Him. If this were so, it would be difficult to see how the religious experience, one of the profoundest of such experiences, of refuge in God apart from and above the flux and tension of that process could be regarded as real, or how any place would remain for any form of

the famous idea of the flight of the alone to the Alone. That the life of God is a life of blessedness which the world cannot, of itself, destroy or even affect is the background of this experience.¹ But inasmuch as blessedness is not the same as aloofness, the God who is the world's Creator and Saviour is not to be thought of as one in whom blessedness and suffering are sheer antitheses.² Certainly a gospel which lifts up the Cross and writes under it the words, "God so loved the world," could never be content with such an antithesis. If God gave Himself to the redemption of the world through costly suffering, through precious blood, we know that no doctrine of God can be adequate which is not a doctrine of love triumphant through suffering. And if that is true, it means that the love of God is such that we need never fear lest in the suffering of the world we should fail of the assurance of His presence,

¹ I would refer here to Baron von Hügel's characteristically rich and penetrating paper on "Suffering and God" in the second series of his *Essays and Addresses*.

² I leave this sentence as it stands with some hesitation. I do not intend to express the belief that in the absolute harmony and perfection of the divine nature suffering has a place. But a sheer antithesis, under all circumstances, seems to be excluded by the Cross.

sympathy, and help. That assurance is the condition of full faith in God, and it is the power of such faith which is what those who put forward theories of a suffering God are really seeking.

So I come to an end, which is no end. But perhaps what I have just said in a particular connection has a wider application. You remember the old alternatives, on the one hand the *Credo ut intelligam*, on the other the *Intelligo ut credam*. I do not think that either is satisfactory, for faith and understanding are inextricably interwoven. And that is equivalent to saying that the power of faith and the truth of doctrine do, not necessarily at once and in every case, but both ideally and over a large enough field of experience, cohere the one with the other. And so we have not been concerned with questions remote from the springs of true religion. Rather do we need all the truth that we can have of the doctrine of God that we may be free for a deeper faith and free for a richer life.

THE END

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